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New Directions in the Study of Religious Responses to the Black Death[1]

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Abstract

The past decade has seen the publications of numerous excellent studies on the Black Death. For the most part, however, scholars have been preoccupied with debating whether the Black Death was caused by plague or not, parallels between the first, second, and third plague pandemics, and broader historiographical questions of continuity and change. Less attention has been devoted to revisiting the religious responses of Christians, Muslims, and Jews to the natural disaster. Recent scholarship has begun to question previous paradigms in which the responses of these three communities were viewed as qualitatively different in essential characteristics such as their conception of contagion. By emphasizing the internal diversity of views within these monotheistic communities, and drawing on recently published primary sources, scholars attempting to write a nuanced comparative history of the religious responses to the Black Death will be able to avoid the misleading generalizations promoted by their predecessors.

Studying the Black Death Today

Black Death Studies is in excellent health. In the past few years, a series of important monographs and numerous articles have appeared reevaluating the nature, impact, and significance of the pandemic that devastated Central Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and most of Europe in the middle of the 14th century. In part, this heightened interest in the Black Death can certainly be related to a general interest of scholars and readers in epidemic disease, marked as we are by our experience of AIDS, Ebola, Avian flu, and, as I write this essay, Swine flu (H1N1).[2] Yet, the current resurgent attention to the Black Death has been more explicitly characterized by the now well-articulated interest of historians, anthropologists, and biologists in investigating the ways in which disease has shaped, if not determined, human political organizations, social structures, and cultural manifestations.[3] For much of the second half of the 20th century, scholars writing on the Black Death focused on the epidemic's demographic and economic effects in relation to the larger question of whether or not Europe was suffering from overpopulation or not at the beginning of the 14th century. Had the plague been a "good thing" for Europe, in that it brought an end to a demographic deadlock, or was its effect on Europe's population best understood in light of contemporary modes of production? In a series of lectures given almost 25 years ago, David Herlihy offered an overview of the state of the field of research at that time, summarizing previous Malthusian and Marxist informed debates, but also indicating a rising interest in the cultural and intellectual effects of the Black Death.[4]

In the past decade, scholars interested in the historical significance of the Black Death have turned to considering the following broad questions: 1) Was the biological agent that caused the Black Death *Yersinia pestis* (plague)? And if not, then what was it? 2) What can we learn from comparing the Black Death, which announced the beginning of

the second plague pandemic lasting from the 14th until the 19th century, with the first plague pandemic (6th–8th centuries) and the third plague pandemic (late 19th century until today)? 3) Was the Black Death experienced as a critical turning point by European and Middle Eastern societies, or was it simply understood as one of many natural disasters?

It is the first of these questions, rooted in a renewed interest in the thesis proposed by the biologist Graham Twigg in his 1984 *The Black Death: a biological reappraisal*, to which the greatest amount of scholarship has been devoted; so much so, in fact, that in the last two years, a series of articles have appeared summarizing the ballooning amount of material on the subject, with contributions to a recent volume edited by Vivian Nutton, *Pestilential Complexities: Understanding Medieval Plague*, offering the best point of entry into what has become a heated debate on whether the rapid spread of the Black Death could have been caused by either bubonic or pneumonic plague.[5] The second line of inquiry, which has tended to be pursued by scholars who implicitly or explicitly accept that the main biological agent involved in all three pandemics was the plague bacteria *Yersinia Pestis*, has been most recently explored in the excellent contributions to a volume edited by Lester Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*.[6] The third question is addressed in passing in many of the works discussed below, but no consensus on the matter has yet taken form.[7]

Until recently, when the Justinianic pandemic of the 6–8th centuries has attracted greater attention, the vast majority of writing on plague in general, and specifically the Black Death, was devoted to Western Europe. Even now, the number of scholars who have written on the effects of plague in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe is comparatively small compared with the veritable army of scholars who have written on the Black Death in England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy.[8] To reiterate then, the state of Black Death Studies is strong, but one-sidedly so: scholars have tended to look closely at a certain set of questions within a particular geographic area to the exclusion of other themes and regions. In this essay, instead of looking at the questions outlined above, which I believe to have been amply discussed in the cited sources, I will examine work that has discussed religious responses to the Black Death among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities around the Mediterranean. More specifically, I am interested here in examining both the ways in which, on the one hand, believers drew on scripture and ritual to confront the plague, and, on the other, scholars today have construed the responses of the three monotheistic communities to be essentially distinct. While a small body of work has appeared on these subjects, and there seems to be considerable interest in authors pursuing comparative work, it has been difficult even for those working on the Black Death to keep track of contributions to this discussion. This has been in large part due to many of the materials discussed here having appeared within more general monographs, specialist journals, or edited volumes.

Christians, Muslims, and Jews Confront the Plague

The Black Death was a terrible natural disaster that killed one to two thirds of Europe's populations, though despite its geographical reach – from Central Asia through the Middle East to Scandinavia – it was by far not a universal disaster in that many areas within this region were, at least initially, untouched.[9] It has become commonplace to observe that 1348 was but the beginning of the second pandemic, and the plague returned intermittently roughly every decade or so, though it did so with a certain degree of regional variability.[10] The influence of the plague, then, cannot be understood if confined merely to the Black Death, but needs to be seen in the context of outbreaks that continued over

subsequent centuries. And yet, simultaneously, and especially when making statements about the effects the plague had on cultural and religious attitudes, scholars have argued for the importance of remembering that each outbreak of the plague was experienced at the time as a specific, possibly unique, disaster. Drawing on liturgical writings, Jussi Hanska has argued that the response of Christians who had experienced previous ''ultimate'' natural disasters shaped their response to the plague, and, while the distinctive nature of the Black Death should not be overlooked, this observation is equally valid for Muslim and Jewish communities.[11]

The Black Death, for all of its uniqueness in our contemporary consciousness, was only one of many disasters faced by the monotheist religious communities living around the Mediterranean, and the ways in which they responded to the challenge of plague can be productively understood in light of how they faced and understood famines, floods, and earthquakes, for example.[12] Our ability to make such a comparison depends on our knowing how Christians, Muslims, and Jews understood the significance of the Black Death, or to what degree these groups possessed discrete views on this issue at all.

A Misdiagnosis?

The historiographical stakes in comparing the responses of religious communities to epidemic disease are high. Before examining more general observations regarding the ways in which these three groups drew on religious sources to make sense of the plague, it is worth considering one case in which such generalizations have missed their target. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Protestant authors would argue about whether or not one had a duty to stay and tend to one's afflicted Christian brethren, with those who advocated fleeing the plague comparing their opponents on occasion with Turkish Muslims.[13] Similarly, the German philosopher Leibniz (d. 1716) argued against fatalism by comparing its adherents to the Turks who failed to avoid areas struck by the plague.[14] While the views of these pre-modern authors can certainly be explained in part by the ideological exigencies of the period, historians of the Black Death today have similarly differentiated between Christian and Muslim responses to the Black Death, arguing that the former accepted contagion theory, and flight from the plague, while the latter did not, believing that the epidemic had been decreed by God and that it was not contagious.[15] The assertion that Muslims accepted the Black Death and (more generally) the plague fatalistically, and denied the plague's contagion is hardly a neutral one: it has often be taken to imply that there were scriptural or theological reasons why Muslims in general were not as open as Christians to fleeing from the plague or to the (presumed) overwhelming empirical evidence for the plague's contagious nature. As a corollary, it is argued that any Muslim opposing these tenets must have been thought to have been a heretic, and would have been punished by the Muslim community. Here the example of Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1374), the prolific and rightly celebrated Granadan vizier and man of letters is adduced. This Muslim scholar wrote a plague treatise in the aftermath of the Black Death, in which he argued that, despite sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, the plague was in fact contagious and there was ample empirical evidence to prove it. Ibn al-Khaṭīb's murder after having been found guilty of heresy 25 years after the Black Death has been widely construed by students of Medieval European history as having been due to the rigid and intolerant nature of Islamic orthodoxy, and, I suspect, a general impression that scientific thought in the Muslim world was in decline.[16]

The origin of both the idea that Muslims generally tended to deny the theory of contagion, and that Ibn al-Khaṭīb was a free-thinking exception in a sea of fatalistic,

narrow-minded Muslim jurists and theologians has a long history, but is most recently found in the otherwise excellent and groundbreaking work of Michael Dols.[17] Dols, who in his monograph *The Black Death in the Middle East* and a series of widely cited articles laid the foundation for all subsequent work on plague in the pre-Modern Arab Muslim world, developed his understanding of Muslim attitudes towards contagion based on a comparatively small number of texts, which did in fact represent a widely held view in the Arab Muslim world.[18] I have recently argued, however, that Ibn al-Khaṭīb's views, far from unique, were merely a particularly strident expression of a minority view advocated openly by many Muslim jurists, who believed in the transmission of disease, be it under the rubric of contagion or not.[19] Far from having been accused of heresy for his statement on contagion, Ibn al-Khaṭīb's opinions on the plague were debated by succeeding generations of scholars as can be seen in a recently published collection of legal opinions from the 15th century and in that his eventual trial for heresy was most likely politically motivated.[20] I have discussed the example of Ibn al-Khaṭīb in such detail as his case reveals that, while general views and practices related to the Black Death can be identified with specific religious communities with some accuracy, the degree of variability with these beliefs needs to be emphasized. In addition, as will be seen below, Muslims, Christians, and Jews shared a considerable number of attitudes towards the plague.

Prayer, Procession, and Persecution

Our sources for the explicitly Muslim and Jewish religious, as opposed to medical responses to the Black Death are chiefly chronicles and plague treatises, whereas on the Christian side, we can additionally refer to a large number of ecclesiastical and administrative materials.[21] Broadly speaking, Christians, Muslims, and Jews believed that the Black Death was a punishment from God, sent down to punish those of them who had sinned.[22] In Christian circles, possible candidates for the sins that had brought on the plague included pride, lust, impiety, simony, and licentiousness, not to mention indecent clothing and filial disobedience – though their exact nature was also often left unspecified, as was the case in most Jewish writings.[23] Since the plague was indiscriminate in its victims, the massive death it brought with it raised the question of theodicy, or of why God would have caused the death of so many potential innocents; some Christian scholars explained the death of children to the plague, for example, by referring to their failing to honor their parents, or, conversely, by their death being a punishment for the sins of their parents.[24]

When it came to the cause of the plague, the problem for Muslims was admittedly different than for Christians, for the Prophet's Companions had experienced the first pandemic in Syria in the seventh century during the initial expansion of the early caliphate. Josef van Ess has shown how this initial encounter with the plague by Muslim troops who were undertaking *jihād* to spread Islamic rule, and who believed that martyrdom was their reward if they died doing so, led to dying of the plague being equated with martyrdom in traditions then attributed to the Prophet himself. Comparing the Muslim with the Christian response to the plague, van Ess notes that early Christian constructions of the plague as resulting in martyrdom – as in the writings of Cyprian (d. 258) – were exceptional, whereas since the encounter with the plague occurred as early on as it did in the history of Islam, the equation of death by plague with martyrdom had a much more profound resonance for later generations of Muslims.[25] To be sure, the nascent Muslim community's early encounter with the plague also produced a body of Prophetic traditions that prohibited either entering or leaving a plague afflicted area, leaving later Muslim jurists and theologians with the task of explaining how the plague, despite its

being a martyrdom, should also be avoided.[26] Depending on the jurist, the authority of one or the other part of the Prophet's legacy was stressed, with some prominent jurists stressing the need to flee the plague and barely mentioning the doctrine of martyrdom, if at all.[27]

Both Muslim and Christian communities around the Mediterranean responded to the Black Death with processions, public gatherings, and prayer. Christian communities in Europe had held penitential processions to end and ward off natural catastrophes since the ninth century, and with the arrival of the Black Death, they continued to do so, and to listen to ''catastrophe sermons'' given by the clergy.[28] They did so, despite the fact that within Christian circles, it was widely held that the plague was contagious, believing God's ability to intervene and protect them was greater than this risk posed by public gatherings.[29] In any case, the contemporary understanding of contagion was quite distinct from that professed by modern medicine. As Vivian Nutton and Ann Carmichael have shown in a series of excellent articles, even for Christian doctors (and the same could be said for Muslim ones) who believed in contagion, contemporary etiologies of the plague drew on miasma theory, poorly defined theories of disease transmission, and the influence of the stars.[30]

For their part, Muslim communities throughout the Middle East withdrew outside their cities to fast and pray together in hopes of ending the plague. Here too, such behavior paralleled ritual actions taking during other natural disasters, in this case draught, when Muslim populations would gather together to pray for rain.[31] Though at times debated, this action was approved even by such prominent supporters of the idea that plague led to martyrdom as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1448), who noted that believing in God's decree didn't imply not praying to be cured, and that the plague was in this sense a sickness like any other.[32] In addition to listening to sermons, Muslims preferred to demonstrate their piety and penitence by listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān and the canonical collections of Prophetic Tradition, particularly that of al-Bukhārī.[33]

Unfortunately, we possess little in the way of information regarding collective acts of piety by Jews living either in Europe or in the Middle East. As a religious minority, even when they weren't being accused of having caused the plague and persecuted as a result, they appear to have kept a low profile. Samuel Cohn Jr. has recently reevaluated the many and terrible massacres of the Jews that European Christians carried out during and in the wake of the Black Death, from Italy through the Rhineland to Spain. He argues convincingly that the pogroms that took place in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death were not, as many have assumed, the result of economic tensions.[34] Instead they were first and foremost the result of social elites in shock due to the extant of the natural disaster that had befallen them, and who quickly struck out at a group of social outsiders they believed were threatening Christendom.[35] Cohn rightly notes Pope Clement VI's attempts to protect the Jews, and his (re) promulgation of *Sicut Judeis*, but stresses the extent to which German chroniclers and city councils, members of the social elites, held the Jews responsible for the Black Death and the degree to which the flagellant movement itself – at times associated with violence against the Jews – contained members of all social classes.[36] If we are looking for Jewish views of the plague, on the other hand, they are hardly found in historical chronicles, and we must turn to plagues treatises and Hebrew literature of the period.

Believing Doctors: Medicine, Faith, and the Plague

During and following the Black Death, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish doctors and scholars wrote hundreds of treatises on the plague, drawing principally on Galenic

medicine in doing so.[37] While most of these treatises are principally concerned with describing the plague and suggesting preventative measures and remedies, they also offer insights into the authors' understanding of the religious significance of the plague. This is of special importance for the Jewish plague treatises, to which Ron Barkai has devoted a number of articles, demonstrating not only that Jews in France and Spain translated plague treatises written by Christians into Hebrew, but also that they composed numerous original treatises following the Black Death. Barkai showed that a majority of the Jewish treatises examined by him clearly placed the origin of the plague with God, and noted that none of the treatises he had examined described the plague as contagious.[38] More recently, Susan Einbinder has stressed the importance of appreciating the presence of a variety of contemporary Jewish views on the plague, and believes to have found at least one reference to there being Jewish scholars who thought the Black Death was contagious.[39]

Jewish authors framed and introduced their discussion of plague with Biblical quotations, similar to the manner in which Muslim plague treatises made reference to both Qur'an and Hadith before entering onto a description of treatment and remedies. One irony deserves to be mentioned in this context, namely that where Jewish authors at times refer to the plagues God sent upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians as a sign of God's ability to punish sinners, Muslim scholars at times cite a Prophetic tradition explaining that the origin of plague lies in a punishment that God sent down upon the Jews long ago, and Pope Clement VI noted in a mass the example of David's sin resulting in the punishment of the people of Israel by plague (Second Samuel 24:15–19).[40]

In addition to new Jewish plague treatises that are still coming to light, many Muslim plague treatises still languish in manuscript. We are fortunate that Ibn Ḥajar's massive 15th century treatise on the plague, much referred to by Dols, who consulted it in manuscript, was finally edited and printed in 1991. One striking example of another plague treatise which hasn't yet been printed in its entirety is that of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's oft-cited contemporary Ibn al-Khātima – who held views similar to Ibn al-Khaṭīb on the contagious nature of plague. The work has yet to be edited in its entirety, much less translated.[41] Muslim scholars continued to write plague treatises down until the 19th century, and these later treatises, which have only recently begun to be studied in any depth, reveal a much greater diversity of opinion than previously imagined, especially on the matter of contagion.[42] Considering the degree to which the foundational sources for any evaluation of religious attitudes to the plague, especially for Muslim and Jewish communities, have yet to made available to more than a few scholars, it seems precipitous to offer any blanket generalizations regarding the attitudes of these communities.

Conclusion

"The Sultan of Tlemcen sent me [Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd (d. 842/1438)] as a messenger to the Sultan of Fes in 803/1400. That year there was a great epidemic in the Maghrib, and when I set off for Fes, he sent with us messengers of his, accompanied by a Christian who was with them.… Their intention in doing what they did was not to approach the epidemic by entering the castle. This was their choice and I was in agreement with them. The Christian asked: "What's with these people who don't enter this place? His translator – as he didn't speak Arabic well – said to him: "They have fled from the epidemic." Then the Christian said what we were told had the following meaning: "Fleeing will not save them. There is no doubt that what God has decreed is what will be." When I heard these words, I was dismayed and confused about what I was doing, as it is well known that according to Prophetic Tradition, one shouldn't approach such an area. I rejected

completely that it should seem that one who had no knowledge [of hadith] and who was an unbeliever should be greater in entrusting himself to God's order and more believing in what had been decreed. I knew that it was a trial, so I advised advancing and entered [the castle], though I didn't order the others what to do."[43]

The above anecdote, taken from an as yet unedited manuscript, is quoted by the Tunisian scholar Muḥammad Ḥasan in his extensive introduction to his 2007 critical edition of a correspondence between the Granadan al-Mawwāq (d. 1492) and the Tunisian al-Raṣṣā' (d. 1489).[44] Ḥasan uses this anecdote, and another similar to it, to argue that Christians were generally fatalistic in the matter of the Black Death, whereas Muslims, though they held a diversity of views, argued for fleeing the plague, and had begun instituting quarantines as early as the time of Ibn Khātima in the 14th century.[45] By doing so, he has established in some ways a mirror image of the argument made by Dols, though he draws on significantly fewer sources in doing so, and ignores a substantial body of secondary scholarship that demonstrates otherwise. The danger of being led by a comparative framework to make broad and inaccurate generalizations is apparent in both cases.

To circumvent this danger, and to achieve a more nuanced approach to understanding religious responses to the Black Death, more comparative work is desirable. Stuart Borsch's recent study, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study*, which deals with the economic effects of the pandemic on both countries, and offers a nuanced and detailed explanation for why Egypt emerged from it weakened and England strengthened, is a model in this regard. Another example, and a promising beginning to a comparison of Byzantine and Muslim religious attitudes to the Black Death is found in the collaborative work of Marie-Helène Congourdeau and Mohammed Melhaoui.[46] The re-framing of how we approach the study of the religious and cultural history of the Black Death should not, of course, restrict itself to inter-religious investigations. Jussi Hanska's comparative study of how Christian communities responded to natural disasters, which I have drawn upon repeatedly, is an excellent example of how the Black Death, a subject which will doubtlessly continue to fascinate students of history, can gain new life when placed into a new context.

What can we hope for from comparative studies of religious responses to the Black Death? Instead of enabling us to establish summaries of the major points touched upon by prominent representatives of each faith – a process that while useful necessarily involves a degree of essentializing and hides the diversity of viewpoints and practices present within each faith – comparing religious, social, and intellectual responses to the plague by Muslims, Christians and Jews, helps us better understand the nuances of the reactions of each community. How and when did believers draw on the same or similar scriptural moments to frame the significance of the plague? To what degree did Muslim and Jewish beliefs in the powers of holy men or Sufi saints parallel the Christian faith in the protection against plague offered by saints such as St. Sebastian, St. Roch, and, much more recently, St. Caralampio? To what degree did representatives of these traditions borrow from each other's theological considerations of plague, much as they did with medical knowledge? More extensive comparative work may well give us answers to these and other questions, and will work against any all too facile reductionism when discussing religious responses to the plague.

Short Biography

Justin Stearns is an intellectual historian whose work has examined Christian and Muslim conceptions of contagion, the relationship between law, ethics and science in Islam,

pre-modern Muslim representations of Christians, and the creation of nostalgia for al-Andalus. He has published articles dealing with these subjects in *al-Qantara, Islamic Law and Society*, and *Medieval Encounters*. His current work focuses on the social status of science in the early modern Muslim world. His dissertation ''Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Medieval Islamic and Christian Thought'' (Princeton, 2007) offers a detailed examination of the intellectual sources that Muslim and Christian communities living in Iberia following the Black Death drew on to understand epidemic disease. He has received Fulbright and Fulbright-Hays fellowships to support his research in Spain and Morocco. Before coming to Middlebury College, where he has been teaching in the Religion Department since 2005, he briefly taught Arabic at Otago University in New Zealand. He holds a BA in History (and another in English) from Dartmouth College, and a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University.

Notes

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[2] The literary and psychological significance of disease in the late 20th century has been eloquently and beautifully explored by Susan Sontag in two books: *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978) and *AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988). For a very readable, if already dated, survey of the profusion of new epidemic diseases that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, see A. Karlen, *Plague's Progress: A Social History of Man and Disease* (London: Orion Books, 2001 [1995]).

[3] The literature here is extensive. Classic studies include A. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westwood: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), W. H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Press, 1976), and J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

[4] See the 1985 lectures edited by S. K. Cohn, Jr., in David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), and compare with Herlihy's earlier writings, especially 'Population, Plague, and Social Change in Rural Pistoia, 1201–1430', *Economic History Review,* 18 (1965): 225–244 (reprinted in David Herlihy, *Cities and Society in Medieval Italy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980).

[5] In V. Nutton (ed.), *Pestilential Complexities: Understanding Medieval Plague* (London: The Wellcome Trust, 2008), see especially, L. Walløe, 'Medieval and Modern Bubonic Plague: Some Clinical Continuities', 59–73, S. K. Cohn, Jr., 'Epidemiology of the Black Death and Successive Waves of Plague', 74–100, and D. Antoine, 'The Archaeology of ''Plague'', 101–114. In this essay, I refer interchangeably to the Black Death and plague, while recognizing that the identity of the Black Death is far from settled.

[6] On the question of plague diagnosis, see L. Little (ed.), *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): R. Sallares, 'Ecology, Evolution, and Epidemiology of Plague', 231–89 and M. McCormick, 'Toward a Molecular History of the Justinianic Pandemic', 290–312.

[7] A brief summary that addresses historians' tendencies to either ignore the effects of the Black Death or to exaggerate them out all proportion, can be found in W. C. Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Penguin Press, 2001), 295–301.

[8] Scholars who have worked on the Black Death outside of Western Europe include, but are certainly not limited to, for the Middle East, Michael Dols, Muhammad al-Amīn al-Bazzāz and 'Abd al-Hādī al-Bayyāḍ, for Central Asia, Uli Schamiloglu, for Eastern Europe, Liliana Górska, and for Northern Europe Jussi Hanska and Ole Benedictow (see the Bibliography for full citations).

[9] For an overview of several estimates of the mortality caused by the Black Death, see J. Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival: Religious Responses to Natural Disasters in the Middle Ages* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002), 19–20. I am grateful to Ann Carmichael for referring me to this work.

[10] For a list of plague recurrences in the Middle East – to be used with caution, as Dols was doubtlessly rather uncritical in implying that every report of plague (ṭā'ūn) was Yersinia Pestis – see M. Dols, 'The Second Plague Pandemic and Its Recurrences in the Middle East: 1347–1894', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22/2 (1979): 162–189.

[11] Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival,* 23.

[12] Compare here Hanska with A. Akasoy, 'Islamic Attitudes to Disasters in the Middle Ages: A Comparison of Earthquakes and Plagues', *The Medieval History Journal*, 10 (2007): 387–410.

[13] On evolving Protestant attitudes towards plague, see M. Luther, ''Whether one may Flee from a Deadly Plague'', in *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings 2*, 43 (Concordia Philadelphia, 1968), 113–38; A. Cunningham and O. P. Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 284–88; L. Noordegraaf, ''Calvinism and the Plague in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic'', in J. M. Binneveld, R. Dekker, and H. Binneveld (eds.), *Curing and insuring: Essays on Illness in Past Times* (Uitgeverij Verloren, 1993), 21–31; O. P. Grell, ''Conflicting Duties: Plague and the Obligations of Early Modern Physicians Towards Patients and Commonwealth in England and The Netherlands'', in A. Wear, J. Geyer-Kordesch and R. French (eds.), *Doctors and Ethics: The Earlier Historical Setting of Professional Ethics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 131–52. For a comparison between 16th century Protestant and Catholic writings on the plague, see A. Klairmont, ''The Problem of the Plague: New Challenges to Healing in Sixteenth-Century France'', in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, 5 (1977): 119–127.

[14] See G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E. M. Huggard (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1951), 153.

[15] For Jewish views, see R. Barkai, 'Jewish Treatises on the Black Death (1350–1500): A Preliminary Study', in R. French, J. Arrizabalaga, A. Cunningham and L. García-Ballester (eds.), *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 6–25, 21.

[16] See for example J. Aberth, *The Black Death. The Great Mortality of 1348–50: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 97, 114, and J. P. Byrne, *Daily Life During the Black Death* (Westport: The Greenwood Press, 2006), 263–74. See also S. Einbinder, *No Place of Rest: Jewish Literature, Expulsion, and the Memory of Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 128–30, 215–16. The narrative of independent and rational thought declining in the Muslim world following the 10–12th centuries is wide-spread. For a recent example, see T. Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and the debate between Huff and George Saliba in the *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* at http://www.riifs.org/review_articles/review_v1no2_sliba.htm, accessed on 2 May, 2009.

[17] See M. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 94, and Idem, 'The Comparative Communal Responses to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies', *Viator*, 5 (1974): 269–87. For a fuller discussion of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's views on contagion, see J. Stearns, 'Contagion in Theology and Law: Ethical Considerations in the Writings of Two 14th Century Scholars of Nasrid Granada', *Islamic Law and Society*, 14 (2007): 109–29.

[18] See especially M. Dols, 'Ibn al-Wardī's *Risālah al-Naba' 'an al-Waba'*, a Translation of a Major Source for the History of the Black Death in the Middle East', in D. Kouymjian (ed.), *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974), 443–55, and 'Al-Manbijī's ''Report of the Plague:'' A Treatise on the Plague of 764–65/1362–64 in the Middle East', in D. Williman (ed.), *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 65–75. Dols's view of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's exceptionalism is shared by M. Melhaoui, *Peste, contagion et martyre: Histoire du fléau en Occident musulman medieval* (Paris: Publisud, 2005), 163–77, 203, and Muhammad al-Āmīn al-Bazzāz, *Tārīkh al-Awbi'a wa-l-Majā 'āt bi-l-Maghrib fi-l-Qarnayn al-Thāmin 'Ashr wa-l-Tāsi' 'Ashr* (Rabat: Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa-l-'Ulūm al-Insāniyya, 1992), 393.

[19] See I. Perho, *The Prophet's Medicine: A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars* (Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society, 1995), 91–100; L. Conrad, 'A ninth-century Muslim scholar's discussion of contagion', in L. Conrad and D. Wujastyk (eds.), *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 163–177, and J. Stearns, 'Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Medieval Islamic and Christian Thought', Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2007).

[20] On Ibn al-Khaṭīb's trial see M. I. Calero Secall, ''El Proceso de Ibn al-Jaṭīb'', *Al-Qanṭara*, 22 (2001): 421–61, where the charges against him are discussed on 432–45. The *fatwā* collection referred to here is Al-Mawwāq, M. and M. al-Raṣṣā ' (ed. M. Ḥasan), *Al-Ajwiba al-Tūnisiyya 'alā al-Asila al-Gharnāṭiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī, 2007). I continue to be grateful to Jocelyn Hendrickson for having supplied me with a copy of this work.

[21] For two edited collections of primary sources regarding the plague, see R. Horrox, *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) and J. Aberth, *The Black Death*. Horrox offers a wide array of materials on Christian processions, sermons, and prayers (111–157), whereas Aberth contains excerpts of Muslim Sources, and a single Jewish source.

[22] For Jewish views that the plague was a punishment of God, see R. Barkai, 'Jewish Treatises on the Black Death (1350–1500): A Preliminary Study', in R. French, J. Arrizabalaga, A. Cunningham, and L. García-Ballester (eds.), *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 6–25, 16–18 and 21.

[23] Compare the various views given in R. Horrox, *The Black Death*, 114, 116, 120, 130, 131, 134 and J. Aberth, *The Black Death*, 99. For the plague being a general punishment from God for Jews, see R. Barkai, 'Jewish Treatises on the Black Death (1350–1500)', 18, 21. See, however, S. Einbinder, *No Place of Rest: Jewish Literature, Expulsion, and the Memory of Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 125–127, where Jacob b.

Solomon's 14th century *Evel Rabbati*, citing many of the same Biblical passages as Christian authors did, implies that the plague is a punishment for disobedience.

[24] Compare R. Horrox, *The Black Death,* 134–35 and 146.

[25] See J. Van Ess, *Der Fehltritt des Gelehrten: Die ''Pest von Emmaus'' und ihre theologischen Nachspiele* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2001), 125–26.

[26] See L. Conrad, 'Umar at Sargh: The Evolution of an Umayyad Tradition on Flight from the Plague', in S. Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 428–528. Compare with Van Ess, *Der Fehltritt des Gelehrten*, 38–41 and 244–50.

[27] See J. Stearns, 'Infectious Ideas', Chapters 3 and 5.

[28] J. Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival*, Chapter Three. Compare with R. Horrox, *The Black Death*, 111–120.

[29] J. Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival*, 45–47.

[30] See A. Carmichael, 'Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 44/2 (1991): 213–56; V. Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance', *Medical History*, 27 (1983): 1–34; Idem, 'The Reception of Fracastoro's Theory of Contagion: The Seed That Fell among Thorns?', *Osiris*, 6 (1990): 196–234; Idem, 'Did the Greeks have a Word for it? Contagion and Contagion Theory in Classical Antiquity', in L. Conrad and D. Wujastyk (eds.), *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 137–62.

[31] Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 245–54.

[32] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Badhl al-Mā 'ūn fī Faḍl al-Ṭā'ūn* (Riyad: Dār al-'Āṣima, 1991), 317–18. Compare with the view of the Tunisian scholar al-Raṣṣā ' (d. 1489), who was greatly influenced by Ibn Ḥajar and who argued that such prayers were for health, not for lifting the mercy of martyrdom (Al-Mawwāq, M. and M. al-Raṣṣā ' (ed. M. Ḥasan), *Al-Ajwiba al-Tūnisiyya 'alā al-Asila al-Gharnāṭiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī, 2007), 162–64.

[33] Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 247.

[34] S. K. Cohn, Jr., 'The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews', *Past and Present*, 196 (2007): 3–36.

[35] Ibid., 11, 36.

[36] See here also F. Graus, *Pest-Geissler-Judenmorde: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 56. Graus' work is a *sine qua non* for the study of the flagellant movement, its precedents and parallels.

[37] For a fascinating study of the interconnected worlds of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim doctors in Spain, see L. García-Ballester, 'A Marginal Learned Medical World: Jewish, Muslim and Christian Medical Practitioners, and the Use of Arabic Medical Sources in Late Medieval Spain', in L. García-Ballester, R. French, J. Arrizabalaga, and A. Cunningham (eds.), *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 353–94. This article can be productively supplemented with R. Barkai, 'Between East and West: A Jewish Doctor from Spain', in B. Arbel and D. Jacoby (eds.), *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Portland: F. Cass, 1996), 49–63.

[38] Barkai, 'Jewish Treatises on the Black Death', 21. For a later Jewish plague treatise that similarly identified God as the origin of plague, see R. Barkai, 'Between East and West: A Jewish Doctor from Spain', 60. For more recent works on Jewish plague treatises, see the works of Gerrit Bos in the bibliography.

[39] S. Einbinder, *No Place of Rest,* Chapter Five, especially 129–30. Here the study of rabbinical responsa is of additional value in proving that many Rabbis called for fleeing the plague. Still unsurpassed in this regard is H. J. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors: Studies in Folk-medicine and Folk-lore as reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa (12th–19th Centuries)* (London: Edward Goldston & Son, 1952), 99–105.

[40] For a particularly rich description of the origins of plague, see Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Badhl al-Mā'ūn*, 81–86. Clement VI's mass is found in Horrox, *The Black Death,* 122. The cited passage from Second Samuel is somewhat bewildering, for the sin for which David chooses the punishment of plague is that of carrying out a census.

[41] A critical edition and translation of the three Andalusi plague treatises of Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Khātima, and al-Shaqūrī is in preparation by Jorge Lirola Delgado, Pilar Lirola Delgado, and Ildefonso Garijo Galán.

[42] For a discussion of Muslim plague treatises from the 14–19th centuries, see J. Stearns, 'Infectious Ideas', Chapter Five.

[43] M. Al-Mawwāq and M. al-Raṣṣā ' (ed. M. Ḥasan), *Al-Ajwiba al-Tūnisiyya*, 58.

[44] The cited manuscript is Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd's *Iġhtinām al-furṣa fī muḥādathat 'ālim Qafṣa*. See Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 43. The claim that quarantines were being implemented in al-Andalus and North Africa in the 14th century is anachronistic to say the least, as initial attempts to apply quarantines to prevent the spread of plague occurred first in the 18th and 19th centuries. See al-Bazzāz, *Tārīkh al-Awbi'a wa-l-Majā 'āt*, 403–6.

[46] See M. Congourdeau and M. Melhaoui, 'La perception de la peste en pays chrétien Byzantin et musulman', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 59 (2001): 95–124.

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