

Black Death Analysis

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This is an essay comparing and contrasting the reactions of Muslims' and Christians', two distinct religions, during the course of the Black Death.

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The Black Death was a plague that came from China during the mid-14th century. It eventually made its way around the world, particularly focusing on Europe and the Middle East, killing about 33% of their population. Religion and world-views influenced the people's responses and reactions to this catastrophe. The reactions from two major religions, Christian and Muslim, had distinguishable differences among one another.

In general, the reaction of Christians during the Black Death was that of anger and despair. They chose to turn away from their religion. The Christians were completely convinced that the Black Death was the end of the world. Agnolo de Tura, a chronicler from 1348, said, "Indeed, one who did not see such horribleness can be called blessed." In essence, he believed that the Black Death was equal to a curse.

The Christians believed that their God was forsaking them and in turn, forsake him. Document 6, states, "The people became more inclined than before to evil and wickedness." In addition, Document 6 goes on to say, "a spirit of rebellion that neither king, law, nor justice could curb them. These quotes illustrate the Christians' stray from their God, their loss of dependency from him, and a desire to take matters into their own hands. At this point, they legitimately stopped believing in the refuge of their God.

Simultaneously, the Christians had a specific world view in the course of the Black Death. They came to the conclusion that the Jews were guilty of this "crime" (Document 7). They were sure that the Jews caused the Black Death and its misfortune. Needless to say, the Christians decided to seek revenge and mercilessly burned swarms of Jews, killing over 900 (Document 7). When the town council of Strasbuorg tried to interfere during a mob attack towards Jews, the council was thrown out of office (Document 7). This shows that the Christians were tenacious with their purpose and they weren't about to cease their sin for the cause of God, let alone for the town council. One certain individual, Pope Clement VI, claimed, "Jews have provided the cause of the occasion for such a crime is without plausibility." Even an individual as holy as a pope, was falling apart with despair from the Black Death.

On the contrary, and as a generalization, the Muslims' reactions towards the Black Death were that of hope and direction. Unlike the Christians' rejection of religion during this period, the Muslims turned to their religion. The Christians believed that the plague was a curse from their God; nevertheless, Muslims took the plague as a blessing. Muhammad al-Manbijji, an Islamic scholar, from 1364, said, "plague is a blessing from God" a Muslim should devoutly accept the divine act. So not only did Muslims believe that the plague was a blessing, but that it should also be well received. Prayer to Allah to abolish the Black Death was almost repugnant.

Moreover, evidence shows that as a result of the Black Death, the Muslims became more inclined to obeying the laws of their religion. Document 9 states, "the people fasted for three successive days" There were also frequent visits to their temple of worship, the mosque, which overfilled quickly with Muslims throughout the time of the plague. The Muslims were so dedicated to their God during this time that they were usually found spending the night at the mosque in prayer (Document 9). The Muslims sought complete submission and often read from their book of worship, the Koran.

As for the Muslims' world view on this disastrous event, they came to the conclusion that sin was the cause of this epidemic. They self-reproached themselves and believed that their own sin was to blame. Essentially, they held a case of self-incrimination and guilt. Other factors

Black Death Analysis

provoked the Black Death as well. Evil moistures from overpopulation and evil fairies or demons caused the Black Death according to Document 5. Although this was believed by the Muslims, the main belief for the cause of the plague was sin, such as alcohol and prostitution. To solve this problem and as an attempt to cease sin, the Muslims passed severe laws against alcohol and prostitution (Document 5).

Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î Î In the year of 1348, both the Christian and Muslim religion encountered the Black Death, the most destructive natural phenomenon in the history of the world. Both alike were challenged and tested by means of their faith during this plague. However, each religion reacted in a different way toward this deadly event. Using the Documents provided, we learn that the Christian followers turned away from their religion while the Muslim followers turned to their religion. Since these concepts are generalizations, we must also remember that Muslims and Christians each could have responded in several different ways. Yet all in all, one accurate fact is prominent to the generalizationsâ the fact that religion and world-views did indeed influence the responses and reactions of people all around the world who experienced the Black Death.

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