Week 6:  
I. Thomas Walsingham Peasant Rebels in London 1381

Thomas Walsingham (d. 1422) was the Benedictine author of six chronicles, including a portion of the famous "St. Alban's Chronicle." Although little is known of his life, his description of the Peasants' Revolt is a riveting and, by the standards of the time, reliable account of events early in the reign of king Richard II (r. 1377-1399). The revolt, one of the largest of its kind, was a response to noble demands on a population experiencing declining incomes as a result of the Black Death, the costs of war with France, and the realm's poor administration. The poll tax imposed on adult males in 1380 sparked a rebellion, led by Wat Tyler (d. 1381) and preacher John Ball, of townsmen and peasants in southeastern England. The larger causes can be found in the final breakdown of serfdom—a breakdown vigorously opposed by a nobility in decline and supported by a peasantry with new opportunities brought about by the scarcity of labor.

Thomas Walsingham, Peasant Rebels in London

On the next day [Corpus Christi] the rebels went in and out of London and talked with the simple commons of the city about the acquiring of liberty and the seizure of the traitors, especially the duke of Lancaster whom they hated most of all; and in a short time easily persuaded all the poorer citizens to support them in their conspiracy. And when, later that day, the sun had climbed higher and grown warm and the rebels had tasted various wines and expensive drinks at will and so had become less drunk than mad (for the great men and common people of London had left all their cellars open to the rebels), they began to debate at length about the traitors with the more simple men of the city. Among other things they assembled and set out for the Savoy, the residence of the duke of Lancaster, unrivalled in splendour and nobility within England, which they then set to the flames. . . . This news so delighted the common people of London that, thinking it particularly shameful for others to harm and injure the duke before themselves, they immediately ran there like madmen, set fire to the place on all sides and so destroyed it. In order that the whole community of the realm should know that they were not motivated by avarice, they made a proclamation that no one should retain for his own use any object found there under penalty of execution. Instead they broke the gold and silver vessels, of which there were many at the Savoy, into pieces with their axes and threw them into the Thames or the sewers. They tore the golden cloths and silk hangings to pieces and crushed them underfoot; they ground up rings and other jewels inlaid with precious stones in small mortars, so that they could never be used again. . . . After these malicious deeds, the rebels destroyed the place called the "Temple Bar" (in which the more noble apprentices of the law lived) because of their anger. . . . and there many muniments which the lawyers were keeping in custody were consumed by fire. Even more insanely they set fire to the noble house of the Hospital of St. John at Clerkenwell so that it burnt continuously for the next seven days. . . . For who would ever have believed that such rustics, and most inferior ones at that, would dare (not in crowds but individually) to enter the chamber of the king and of his mother with their filthy sticks; and undeterred by
any of the soldiers, to stroke and lay their uncouth and sordid hands on the beards of several most noble knights. Moreover, they conversed familiarly with the soldiers asking them to be faithful to the ribalds and friendly in the future.... [They] gained access singly and in groups to the rooms in the Tower, they arrogantly lay and sat on the king’s bed while joking; and several asked the king’s mother to kiss them. . . . The rebels, who had formerly belonged to the most lowly condition of serf, went in and out like lords; and swineherds set themselves above soldiers. . . .

When the archbishop finally heard the rebels coming, he said to his men with great fortitude: "Let us go with confidence, for it is better to die when it can no longer help to live. At no previous time of my life could I have died in such security of conscience." A little later the executioners entered crying, "Where is that traitor to the kingdom? Where the despoiler of the common people?" . . . [They] dragged the archbishop along the passages by his arms and hood to their fellows once outside the gates on Tower Hill. . . . Words could not be heard among their horrible shrieks but rather their throats sounded with the bleating of sheep, or, to be more accurate, with the devilish voices of peacocks. . . . Scarcely could the archbishop finish [his] speech before the rebels broke out with the horrible shout that they feared neither an interdict nor the Pope; all that remained for him, as a man false to the community and treasonable to the realm was to submit his neck to the executioners' swords. The archbishop now realised that his death was imminent and inevitable. . . . He was first struck severely but not fatally in the neck. He put his hand to the wound and said: "Ah! Ah! this is the hand of God." As he did not move his hand from the place of sorrow the second blow cut off the top of his fingers as well as severing part of the arteries. But the archbishop still did not die, and only on the eighth blow, wretchedly wounded in the neck and on the head, did he complete what we believe is worthy to be called his martyrdom. . . . Nor did they show any reverence to any holy places but killed those whom they hated even if they were within churches and in sanctuary. I have heard from a trustworthy witness that thirty Flemings were violently dragged out of the church of the Austin Friars in London and executed in the open street. . . .

On the next day, Saturday 15 June (the feasts of Saints Vitus and Modestus), behold, the men of Kent showed themselves no less persistent in their wicked actions than on the previous day: they continued to kill men and to burn and destroy houses. The king sent messengers to the Kentishmen telling them that their fellows had left to live in peace henceforward and promising that he would give them too a similar form of peace if they would accept it. The rebels' greatest leader was called "Walter Helier" or "Tylere" (for such names had been given to him because of his trade), a cunning man endowed with much sense if he had decided to apply his intelligence to good purposes. . . . On this the king, although a boy and of tender age, took courage and ordered the mayor of London to arrest Tyler. The mayor, a man of incomparable spirit and bravery, arrested Tyler without question and struck him a blow on the head which hurt him badly. Tyler
was soon surrounded by the other servants of the king and pierced by sword thrusts in several parts of his body. His death, as he fell from his horse to the ground, was the first incident to restore to the English knighthood their almost extinct hope that they could resist the commons. . . . But the king, with marvellous presence of mind and courage for so young a man, spurred his horse towards the commons and rode around them, saying, "What is this, my men? What are you doing? Surely you do not wish to fire on your own king? Do not attack me and do not regret the death of that traitor and ruffian. For I will be your king, your captain and your leader. Follow me into the field where you can have all the things you would like to ask for." . . .

The commons were allowed to spend the night under the open sky. However the king ordered that the written and sealed charter which they had requested should be handed to them in order to avoid more trouble at that time. He knew that Essex was not yet pacified nor Kent settled; and the commons and rustics of both counties were ready to rebel if he failed to satisfy them quickly. . . . Once they had this charter, the commons returned to their homes. But still the earlier evils by no means ceased.

QUESTIONS
1. How did Thomas Walsingham describe the different classes of society?
2. What does the account suggest about economic and political conditions in late fourteenth-century England?
3. How did the rebels choose their targets, both human and material? What were they seeking? Against what were they protesting?
4. What was the rebels' attitude toward religious authority? What might explain their actions?


II. Demands of the Ciompi
The demographic disaster of the Black Death (1347-1350) and economic troubles of the fourteenth century deeply disturbed the social stability of Europe. Workers and peasants revolted against the ruling elites across Europe. In 1378 an urban revolt broke out in Florence, Italy. The Florentine Republic was dominated by an oligarchy of wealthy merchants. The majority of rebels were clothworkers, termed the Ciompi. Their work was regulated by the Lana or Wool guild, which was made up of the wealthy merchants who owned the industry. The workers were not allowed to form their own guilds. The Ciompi also had been burdened by heavy forced loans imposed to pay for a war with the papacy. They called themselves the popolo minuto or little people, in opposition to elites.

[July 21, 1378] When the popolo and the guildsmen had seized the palace [of the podesta], they sent a message to the Signoria... that they wished to make certain demands by means of petitions, which were just and reasonable.... They said
that, for the peace and repose of the city, they wanted certain things which they had decided among themselves... and they begged the priors [town executives] to have them read, and then to deliberate on them, and to present them to their colleges. The first chapter [of the petition] stated that the Lana [Wool] guild would no longer have a [police] official of the guild. Another was that the combers, carders, trimmers, washers, and other cloth workers would have their own [guild] consuls, and would no longer be subject to the Lana guild. Another chapter [stated that] the Commune's funded debt would no longer pay interest, but the capital would be restored [to the shareholders] within twelve years. Another chapter was that all outlaws and those who had been condemned by the Commune... except rebels and traitors would be pardoned. Moreover, all penalties involving a loss of a limb would be cancelled, and those who were condemned would pay a money fine.... Furthermore, for two years none of the poor people could be prosecuted for debts of 50 florins or less. For a period of six months, no forced loans were to be levied.... And within that six months' period, a schedule for levying direct taxes [estimo] was to be compiled.... The popolo entered the palace and [the podesta, or city manager] departed, without any harm being done to him. They ascended the bell tower and placed there the emblem of the blacksmiths' guild, that is, the tongs. Then the banners of the other guilds, both great and small, were unfurled from the windows of the [palace of] the podesta, and also the standard of justice, but there was no flag of the Lana guild. Those inside the palace threw out and burned... every document which they found. And they remained there, all that day and night, in honor of God. Both rich and poor were there, each one to protect the standard of his guild. The next morning the popolo brought the standard of justice from the palace and they marched, all armed, to the Piazza della Signoria, shouting: "Long live the popolo minuto.... Then they began to cry "that the Signoria [town executives] should leave, and if they didn't wish to depart, they would be taken to their homes."

Into the piazza came a certain Michele di Lando, a wool-comber, who was the son of Monna Simona, who sold provisions to the prisoners in the Stinche [prison]... and he was seized and the standard of justice placed in his hands.... Then the popolo ordered the priors to abandon the palace. It was well furnished with supplies necessary [for defense] but they were frightened men and they left [the palace], which was the best course. Then the popolo entered, taking with them the standard of justice... and they entered all the rooms and they found many ropes which [the authorities] had bought to hang the poor people.... Several young men climbed the bell tower and rang the bells to signal the victory which they had won in seizing the palace, in God's honor. Then they decided to do everything necessary to fortify themselves and to liberate the popolo minuto. Then they acclaimed the wool comber, Michele di Lando, as signore and standard-bearer of justice, and he was signore for two days.... Then [the popolo] decided to call other priors who would be good comrades and who would fill up the office of those priors who had been expelled. And so by acclamation, they named eight priors and the Twelve and the [Sixteen] standard-bearers.
they wished to convene a council, these priors called together the colleges and the consuls of the guilds. This council enacted a decree that everyone who had been proscribed as a Ghibelline [faction member] since 1357 was to be restored to Guelf [faction member] status. And this was done to give a part to more people, and so that each would be content, and each would have a share of the offices, and so that all of the citizens would be united. Thus poor men would have their due, for they have always borne the expenses [of government], and only the rich have profited.

QUESTIONS:
1. Judging from this account, what were the goals of the Ciompi rebels?
2. How revolutionary were their actions?


III. Letters of Alessandra Strozzi

These are excerpts from letters written by a widowed mother in Florence arranging a marriage for her adult son Filippo, who was in exile in Naples. The Strozzi were one of the richest families of Renaissance Florence, but in this period the adult males were exiled in punishment for political opposition to the Medici. The letters reveal how elites--men and women--viewed marriage alliances and marriageable girls. A dowry was money or property provided by the bride’s family to support their daughter and her married household. In this period, dowries could be very expensive.

[April 20, 1464]... Concerning the matter of a wife [for Filippo], it appears to me that if Francesco di Messer Guglielmino Tanagli wishes to give his daughter, that it would be a fine marriage.... Now I will speak with Marco [Parenti, Alessandra’s son-in-law], to see if there are other prospects that would be better, and if there are none, then we will learn if he wishes to give her [in marriage]. Francesco Tanagli has a good reputation, and he has held office, not the highest, but still he has been in office. You may ask: "Why should he give her to someone in exile?" There are three reasons. First, there aren't many young men of good family who have both virtue and property. Secondly, she has only a small dowry, 1,000 florins, which is the dowry of an artisan.... Third, I believe that he will give her away, because he has a large family and he will need help to settle them....

[July 26, 1465]... Marco Parenti came to me and told me that for some time, he has been considering how to find a wife for you.... There is the daughter of Francesco di Messer Guglielmino Tanagli, and until now there hasn't been anyone who is better suited for you than this girl. It is true that we haven't discussed this at length, for a reason which you understand. However, we have made secret inquiries, and the only people who are willing to make a marriage agreement with exiles have some flaw, either a lack of money or something else. Now money is the least serious drawback, if the other factors are positive....
Francesco is a good friend of Marco and he trusts him. On S. Jacopo's day, he spoke to him discreetly and persuasively, saying that for several months he had heard that we were interested in the girl and... that when we had made up our minds, she will come to us willingly. [He said that] you were a worthy man, and that his family had always made good marriages, but that he had only a small dowry to give her, and so he would prefer to send her outside of Florence to someone of worth, rather than to give her to someone here, from among those who were available, with little money.... He invited Marco to his house and he called the girl down.... Marco said that she was attractive and that she appeared to be suitable. We have information that she is affable and competent. She is responsible for a large family (there are twelve children, six boys and six girls), and the mother is always pregnant and isn't very competent....

[August 17, 1465]... Sunday morning I went to the first mass at S. Reparata... to see the Adimari girl, who customarily goes to that mass, and I found the Tanagli girl there. Not knowing who she was, I stood beside her.... She is very attractive, well proportioned, as large or larger than Caterina [Alessandra's daughter].... She has a long face, and her features are not very delicate, but they aren't like a peasant's. From her demeanor, she does not appear to me to be indolent.... I walked behind her as we left the church, and thus I realized that she was one of the Tanagli. So I am somewhat enlightened about her....

[August 31, 1465]... I have recently received some very favorable information [about the Tanagli girl] from two individuals.... They are in agreement that whoever gets her will be content.... Concerning her beauty, they told me what I had already seen, that she is attractive and well-proportioned. Her face is long, but I couldn't look directly into her face, since she appeared to be aware that I was examining her... and so she turned away from me like the wind.... She reads quite well... and she can dance and sing.... Her father is one of the most respected young men of Florence, very civilized in his manners. He is fond of this girl, and it appears that he has brought her up well. So yesterday I sent for Marco and told him what I had learned. And we talked about the matter for a while, and decided that he should say something to the father and give him a little hope, but not so much that we couldn't withdraw, and find out from him the amount of the dowry.... Marco and Francesco [Tanagli] had a discussion, about this yesterday (I haven't seen him since), and Marco should inform you about it one of these days, and you will then understand more clearly what should follow. May God help us to choose what will contribute to our tranquillity and to the consolation of us all....

[September 13, 1465]... Marco came to me and said that he had met with Francesco Tanagli, who had spoken very coldly, so that I understand that he had changed his mind. They say that he wants to discuss the matter with his brother-in-law, Messer Antonio Ridolfi.... And he [Francesco] says that it would be a serious matter to send his daughter so far away [to Naples], and to a house that might be described as a hotel. And he spoke in such a way that it is clear that he has changed his mind. I believe that this is the result of the long delay in our
replying to him, both yours and Marco's. Two weeks ago, he could have given him a little hope. Now this delay has angered him, and he has at hand some prospect that is more attractive.... I am very annoyed by this business; I can't recall when I have been so troubled. For I felt that this marriage would have satisfied our needs better than any other we could have found.... [Filippo Strozzi eventually married Fiametta di Donato Adimari, in 1466.]

QUESTIONS:
1. What qualities did elites look for in a wife? How important was the dowry?
2. How did they negotiate a marriage?
3. In what ways were the prospective bride and groom involved? The larger families?


4. Letters of Catherine of Siena
Caterina di Iacopo di Benincasa (Catherine of Siena) was born in 1347, as the twenty-fourth of twenty-five children. Her father and brothers were members of the Lana, or Wool Guild. From early childhood she sought to live a religious life, and refused to marry. After she had been accepted (when she was about eighteen years old) as a member of the Mantellate, a group of Dominican laywomen committed to service of the poor and sick of the city, she was bent on prayer in silence and solitude. She enjoyed a sudden and unexpected mystical experience that she termed a "mystical marriage" with Christ when she was about twenty-one. Catherine with the encouragement of her Dominican confessor Raymond of Capua gathered a group of followers and began to reach out beyond Siena to Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Avignon, and eventually Rome. We possess over three hundred eighty of Catherine's letters, the earliest written perhaps about 1370 or even before, but most dating from 1374 until her death in 1380, at age 33. The letters are addressed to persons as diverse as popes and prisoners, queens and prostitutes, to intimate friends and relatives and to persons Catherine had never met face to face. She would write, it seems, to anyone she thought she might influence, whether for their personal good or that of the larger Church.

Letter to a prostitute in Perugia, written at the request of one of the woman's brothers
Late January to early May 1376
In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of the Virgin Mary.
Dearest daughter in Christ gentle Jesus,
I Caterina, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, am writing to you in his precious blood. I long to see you sharing in the blood of God's Son, because
without his blood you cannot have life. Who are those who share in his blood? Those who live in sweet holy fear of God. Whoever fears God would rather die than ever sin mortally against God. So, my daughter, I weep with sorrow that you who are created in God's image and likeness and redeemed by his precious blood have no concern for your dignity or for the great price that was paid for you. It seems you are acting like a pig rolling in the mud, the way you are rolling in the mud of indecency. You have been made a servant and slave of sin. You have taken the devil as your lord and are serving him day and night. Consider this. A lord gives his servants out of what he himself has. If you are serving the devil, you are sharing in what is his. But what does the devil have, my daughter? Darkness, Storms, bitterness, pain, torments, and scourges. Where he lives there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and people are deprived of the light of God, the vision that constitutes the soul's blessedness. The devils were deprived of this vision because of their pride; those, therefore, who follow the devil's will are also deprived of this vision. These, then, are the unbearable sufferings bestowed upon those who go running after the wickedness of deadly sins. Words cannot possibly describe them!

Oimé Oimé! To think that you have ceased to remember your Creator! To think that you don't see that you've become like a severed limb that dries up once it is cut off from the body! That's how you are when you're cut off and severed from Christ because of deadly sin. You become like dried-up, shrunken, sterile wood. You make a down payment on hell in this life. Don't you give any thought, daughter, to how wretched your servitude is? To the fact that even in this life you have hell in the company of horrible devils? Leave, oh leave this dangerous servitude and darkness into which you've been led! Oime! If you won't do it for love of God, you should at do it for worldly shame and embarrassment! Don't you see that it's you yourself who are putting yourself into men's hands to make a disgrace and a mockery and a joke of your body? Don't you see that you're being (and are loving) with a mercenary, death-dealing love? That your love and theirs is measured only by the pleasure or advantage they and you get out of it? You attract love to the extent that you attract pleasure or gifts, because this love is founded not in God but in the devil.

Reflect, daughter, that you will surely die, and you don't know when. This is why our gentle Savior said, "Be ready, because you do not know when you will be called to account." And Saint John says, "[God] has already set the axe to the root of the tree, and for no other reason than to cut it down. Imagine the supreme Judge calling you to account right now, and here you are, in the devil's hands and damned. You must appear, and you have no one to answer for you. For it is the virtues that can answer for you and help and assist you, and you don't have them. But you certainly have friends to condemn you before the true Judge; I mean the world, the flesh, and the devil, whom you've been serving so assiduously. And they are accusing you-laying bare, to your great shame and confusion, the offenses you have committed against God. They are condemning you to death. They are leading you away to where they live, where there is fire,
the stench of sulphur, the gnashing of teeth, chill, and heat. And the worm of conscience ceaselessly gnaws and reproaches you because you see that it is through your own fault that you have been cheated of the vision of God and have earned the sight of the devils. So this is your reward for having served the world, the flesh, and the devil, for having worn yourself out for them. Now that you see how they are making you deserving of such evil and are cheating you of so much good, do a holy violence to yourself. Get up from such wretchedness and filth. Run back to your Creator, who will receive you if only you are willing to abandon deadly sin and return to the state of grace. I tell you, my dearest daughter, if you vomit out the filth of sin by holy confession with the resolution of not falling again or returning to your vomit, God's gentle kindness says: "I assure you I will not remember that you ever offended me." This is indeed so. God has no wish to punish in the next life those who punish their own sins with contrition and contempt. Don't let this seem burdensome to you. Have recourse to that dear Mary, mother of mercy and compassion. She will lead you into her Son's presence, showing him for your sake the breast by which she nursed him, and so persuade him to be merciful to you. Then you, as a daughter and servant ransomed by his blood, enter within the wounds of God's Son, where you will find such a fire of indescribable charity that it will burn away and consume all your wretchedness and sins. You will see that he has made a bath of his blood for you, to wash you clean of the leprosy of deadly sin and of the filth in which you have lived for so long. Your dear God will not reject you.

Take along as your companion and learn from that dear Magdalen, so in love. As soon as she has seen her evil and sin, as soon as she has seen that she is living in damnation, she rises up with immense hatred for offending God and with love for virtue. She goes looking for a way to find mercy. She sees clearly that she can find it only in Christ gentle Jesus, and so she goes to him. Heedless of honor or shame, she humbly throws herself at his feet. So, because of her love and bitter sorrow and perfect humility, she receives the remission of her sins. She wins the reward of hearing those sweet words: "Go in peace, Mary, and sin no more." Now you do the same, my dearest daughter. Run to him. Look at that humble action of the Magdalen, sitting at his feet and showing her emotion, showing that she is moved with heartfelt contrition, that she does not consider herself worthy to come before the face of her Master. So you too, go with your heart and emotion and body; sleep no more, because you have no time. And since you have no time, don't wait for time. Respond to Christ crucified, who is calling you in a humble voice. Run after the fragrance of his ointment. Bathe in the blood of Christ crucified, for this is how you will share in his blood. This is how my soul is longing to see you sharing in the blood, longing for you to be a member bound by grace to your head, Christ crucified. And if you should say to me, "Not having anything to live on keeps me from doing this," I tell you God will provide for you. Besides, I've heard from your blood brother that he is willing to help you out with what you need. So don't choose to wait for the divine justice that will come upon you if you do not do this. Don't choose to be a member of the devil any longer. He is using you as his trap to catch people. The harm you are
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doing yourself is already plenty, but think for how many you are an occasion of being sent to hell! I'll say no more. Love Christ crucified. Reflect that you must die, and you don't know when. Keep living in God's holy and tender love. Gentle Jesus! Jesus love! Mary, dear mother!

Letter to Pope Gregory XI, in Avignon, January 1376

In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary, mother of God's Son. Very loved and reverend father in Christ Jesus, Your unworthy, poor, and wretched daughter Caterina, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, is writing to you in his precious blood. I long to see you a productive tree planted in fertile soil and laden with sweet mellow fruit. For a tree uprooted from the soil (I mean the soil of true self-knowledge) would dry up and bear no fruit. If we know ourselves, we are humble, for we see nothing to be proud about. We nourish within ourselves the sweet fruit of blazing charity, recognizing in ourselves God's boundless goodness. And aware of our own nothingness, we attribute whatever being we have to the one who is. So it seems we have no choice but to love what God loves and to hate what he hates. Oh sweet true knowledge! You thrust out your hand, holy desire, bearing the knife of hatred, to cut out and kill the worm of selfish self-centeredness that, so gnaws at and cripples the root of our tree that it can produce no fruit of life. The tree withers and its fruits dry up, and its freshness does not last. For those who love themselves—whether they are rulers or the ruled—within themselves the evil pride that is the head and origin of all evil. For those who are isolated in their self-centeredness, loving themselves selfishly and not for God, can do nothing but evil; all virtue is dead in them. They are like a woman whose children are stillborn—truly so, because they have none of the life, the charity, that is concerned only for the praise and glory of God's name. Those who are in authority, I say, do evil when holy justice dies in them because of their selfish self-centeredness and their fear of incurring the displeasure of others! They see those under them sinning but it seems they pretend not to see and do not correct them. And if they do correct, they do it so feebly and halfheartedly that it is worthless, only a plaster over the vice. They are forever afraid of offending and making enemies and all this because of self-love. Sometimes it's just that they would like to keep peace, and this, I tell you, is the worst cruelty one can inflict. If a sore is not cauterized or excised when necessary, but only ointment is applied, not only will it not heal, but it will infect the whole [body], often fatally.

Oime! Oime! My dear Babbo! [Daddy] This is why those in their care are all rotten, full of uncleanness and evil! Oime! (I say it weeping). How dangerous is that worm I spoke of! For not only does it deal death to the shepherd, but all the rest fall sick and die because of it. Why do the shepherds keep using so much ointment? Because it spares them pain—for they incur no displeasure or ill will by applying ointment to the sick. It was ointment they wanted, and ointment they gave them. Oh human wretchedness! Blind are the patients who do not see their own need, and blind the shepherd-physicians who look only to their own profit.
and desire to please, who to preserve such refrain from using either the knife of justice or the fire of blazing charity! They behave like those of whom Christ says, "If one blind person leads another, they both end up in the ditch"—patient and physician alike end up in hell!

A shepherd such as this is really a hireling! Not only does he fail to rescue his little sheep from the clutches of the wolf; he devours them himself! And all because he loves himself apart from God. He does not follow the gentle Jesus, the true shepherd who gave his life for his little sheep. How dangerous then, for oneself and for others, is this perverted love! How surely we must avoid it, since it does such harm to every generation! I hope, by God's goodness, my venerable father, that you will snuff this out in yourself! I hope you will not love yourself selfishly, nor your neighbors selfishly, nor God selfishly, but will love God because he is supreme eternal Goodness, worthy of being loved, and will love yourself and your neighbors for the honor and glory of Jesus' dear name. I want you to be the sort of true and good shepherd who, had you a hundred thousand lives, would be ready to give them all for God's honor and other people's salvation. Oh my babbo, dear Christ on earth! Imitate that gentle Gregory I, for it will be possible for you as it was for him. The flesh he was made of was no different from yours, and God is the same now as then. We lack nothing but virtue and hunger for the salvation of souls but there is a remedy for this, father: that we do away with loving ourselves or anyone or anything else apart from God. Let us concentrate no longer on friends or relatives or on our own material needs, but only on virtue and the promotion of spiritual matters. For the only reason you are wanting for material things is your abandonment of concern for the spiritual.

... Oh good gentle Jesus! Let popes, pastors, and everyone else blush for shame at our foolishness and pride and self-indulgence, when we see such generosity, goodness, and boundless love on our Creator's part! He showed himself to us in our own humanity as a tree laden with sweet mellow fruit, so that we wild trees might be able to engraft ourselves onto him. This, then, was the way the loving Gregory followed, and the other good shepherds. They recognized that [of themselves] they had neither being nor power, so they looked to the Word, our tree, and engrafted themselves onto him, bound and joined by the bond of love. For people find delight in what they see when it is beautiful and good. So they saw, and seeing, they so bound themselves that they no longer saw themselves, but saw and experienced everything in God. And neither wind nor hail nor the devil nor anything or anyone else could keep them from bearing cultivated fruit, since they were engrafted into the very pith of Jesus our tree. And this pith, sweet charity, to which they were joined, made them produce the fruit they did. There is no other way, and this is what I want to see in you.

If till now you haven't been very firm in truth, I want you, I beg you, for the little time that is left, to be so-courageously and like a brave man-following Christ, whose vicar you are. And don't be afraid, father, no matter what may happen, of
these blustery winds that have descended upon you-I mean those rotten members who have rebelled against you. Don't be afraid, for divine help is near. Just attend to spiritual affairs, to appointing good pastors and administrators in your cities, for you have experienced rebellion because of bad pastors and administrators. Do something about it. And take heart in Christ Jesus and don't be afraid. Pursue and finish with true holy zeal what you have begun by holy intent-I mean your return [to Rome] and the sweet holy crusade. Delay no longer, for your delaying has already been the cause of a lot of trouble. The devil has done and is doing his best to keep this from happening, because he sees that he will be the loser.

Up, father! No more irresponsibility! Raise the standard of the most holy cross, for it is with the fragrance of the cross that you will gain peace. I beg you to invite those who have rebelled against you to a holy peace, so that all this fighting can be diverted toward the unbelievers. I hope that God in his infinite goodness will send his help soon. Courage! Courage! Come, come to reassure God's poor servants, your children. They are waiting for you fondly, lovingly, longingly.

Forgive me, father, for talking to you like this. Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks, you know. I am sure that if you are the kind of tree I want you to be, nothing will stand in your way. I beg you to communicate with Lucca and Pisa as a father, as God will teach you. Help them in any way you can, and urge them to keep holding their ground. I have been in Pisa and Lucca until just now, and have pleaded with them as strongly as I could not to join in league with the rotten members who are rebelling against you. But they are very anxious, since they aren't getting any encouragement from you, and are being constantly goaded and threatened by the other side. Still, they haven't up to now entirely given in. I beg you to write Messer Piero an urgent letter about this; do it for sure and without delay. I'll say no more here.

I've heard you have appointed some cardinals? I believe it would be to God's honor and better for you to be careful always to choose virtuous men. Otherwise it will be a great insult to God and disastrous to holy Church. And then let's not be surprised if God sends us his chastening scourges, and justly. I beg you to do courageously and with fear of God what you have to do. I've heard you are going to promote the master of our order to another office. If this is so, I beg you for love of Christ crucified to see that you give us a good and virtuous vicar. The order needs such, for it has become altogether too overrun with weeds. You can discuss this with Messer Nicola da Osimo and the archbishop of Otranto. I will write to them about it.

Keep living in God's holy and tender love. I humbly ask your blessing. And forgive my boldness in presuming to write to you. Gentle Jesus! Jesus!

Questions
1. Did Catherine change her tone in addressing a prostitute and in addressing
the pope?

2. What did she think gave her the authority to criticize the pope?

3. Did she acknowledge that the woman was a prostitute out of economic need? How did she respond?


5. Letters of Petrarch

The first letter, to his old friend Ludwig van Kempen (whom he called Socrates) is about his decision to make a collection of his letters. He also comments on the impact of the plague year, 1348. The second is a letter of consolation written to a friend grieving because of the death of someone buried at sea. The third letter was sent to a Cardinal of the Church who was famous for his taste for pomp and splendor.

Fam. I, 1.

To his Socrates.

What are we to do now, dear brother? Alas, we have already tried almost everything and no rest is in sight. When can we expect it? Where shall we seek it? Time, as they say, has slipped through our fingers; our former hopes are buried with our friends. The year of 1348 left us alone and helpless; it did not deprive us of things that can be restored by the Indian or Caspian or Carpathian Sea. It subjected us to irreparable losses. Whatever death wrought is now an incurable wound. There is only one consolation in all this: we too shall follow those who preceded us. How long our wait will be I do not know; but this I do know, that it cannot be long. And however short the wait may be, it cannot avoid being burdensome.

But we must desist from complaining, at least for now. I do not know what your preoccupations or what your thinking may be. For me, I am arranging my belongings I in little bundles, as wanderers are wont to do. I am considering; what to bring with me, what to share with friends, and what to burn. I have nothing to be put up for sale. Indeed I am richer, or perhaps I should say more hampered than I thought, because of the great number of writings of different kinds that lie scattered and neglected throughout my house. I search in squalid containers lying in hidden places and pulled out dusty writings half destroyed by decay. I was attacked by a bothersome mouse and by a multitude of highly voracious worms; and the spider, enemy of Pallas [the Greek goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athena], attacked me for doing the work of Pallas. But there is nothing that unyielding and constant labor cannot overcome. Therefore, beset and encircled by confused heaps of letters and formless piles of paper, I began a first attack by determining to throw everything into the fire, thereby avoiding a thankless kind of labor. Later, as thought followed upon thought, I found myself saying, "What stops you from looking behind like a tired traveler from a vantage point after a long journey and slowly recalling the memories and cares of your
This thought finally dominated, and while the work involved did not appeal as a grand undertaking, neither did trying to recall the thoughts and memories of times past seem too unpleasant. But when I began turning over the papers piled at random in no particular order, I was astonished to notice how varied and how disordered their general aspect appeared. I could hardly recognize certain ones, not so much because of their form but because of the changed nature of my own understanding. Other things, however, did come back to mind with considerable delight. ... Thus, this sizeable and varying collection of writings kept me busy for several days and made me concentrate with delight and attachment on my own creations, and especially on those major works that had been interrupted for a considerable time despite the expectation and anticipation they had created in many. But the recollection of the brevity of life overcame me. I feared indeed an ambush, for what is more fleeting, I ask, than life, and what more determined than death? I reflected on the foundation that I had established, on what remained of my labors and on my few lingering years. It seemed rashness, indeed madness, to have undertaken so many long and demanding works in such a brief and indefinite period of time, and to have directed my talents which would hardly suffice for limited undertakings to so great a variety of writings, especially since, as you know, another project awaits me which is the more striking because actions are more praiseworthy than words. What more need I say? You will now hear a thing perhaps incredible but true. I committed to Vulcan's hands for his correction [i.e. the fire] at least a thousand and more of all kinds and variety of poems and friendly letters, not because nothing in them pleased me but because to sort them would have required more work than pleasure. I am not ashamed to admit that I did this with a certain tenderness and with many sighs; just as an overweighted boat in deep waters can be lifted above the billows by discharging overboard even its most precious cargo So it was necessary to render assistance, no matter how drastic, to my preoccupied mind. In any event, while these were burning I noticed lying in a corner, a few others which had been saved, not consciously but by mere chance, or perhaps indeed because they had been transcribed earlier by scribes. All of these had somehow resisted the ravages of time. I say they were a few, but I fear that they may appear too many to the reader and too long to the scribe. To these I was more indulgent than the others and permitted them to live not because of their merit but as a consolation to my labor. Actually they seemed not to require much revision. So, weighing carefully the nature of my two dearest friends, it appeared best to divide the writings in such a way that the prose works would be dedicated to you and the poetic ones to our Barbato [another old friend]. This I remembered that you had both once wished for and I had promised. Thus while all these things were being destroyed as I came across them, and-in the mood I was in--being disinclined to spare even these, the two of you appeared to me, one on the left, the other on the right, and grasping my hand, affectionately urged me not to destroy my promise and your expectation in a single fire as I had determined to do. This above all is what saved all those writings; otherwise, believe me, they would have burned with the rest.
Therefore these that are coming to you from among the manly portions of the remains, of whatever Sort they may be, I am certain you will be reading with understanding and even with eagerness. I dare not refer to what Apuleius of Madaura once said: "Oh reader, pay attention, you will enjoy yourself"; for where can I find so much confidence that I could promise my reader both amusement and pleasure? But nonetheless read these things, my dear Socrates, and since you are very kind to your friends, perhaps you will enjoy them, for if you approve of the writer's mind you will enjoy his style. What does an attractive figure avail if it is to be subject to the judgment of a lover? It is useless for a woman to beautify herself if she is already pleasing. If any of these pieces are appealing to you I must say that they are so not because of me but because of you. They are all testimonials of your friendship rather than samples of my talent.

... Compare my wanderings to those of Ulysses. If the reputation of our name and of our achievements were the same, he indeed traveled neither more nor farther than I. He went beyond the borders of his fatherland when already old. Though it may be true that nothing at any age is longlasting, all things are very brief in old age. I, begotten in exile, was born in exile, with so much labor undergone by my mother, and with so much danger, that she was considered dead for a-long time not only by the mid-wives but by the doctors. Thus I experienced danger even before being born and I approached the very threshold of life under the auspices of death. Arezzo, not an ignoble city of Italy, recalls all this. It was there that my father, expelled from his native city, fled with a large number of good men. From there, in my seventh month I was taken and carried throughout Tuscany on the arm of a strong young man. Since I enjoy recalling for you these first labors and dangers of mine I might add that he carried me hanging at the end of a rod after having wrapped me in a linen cloth so as not to hurt my tender body just as Metabus had done with Camilla. While crossing the Arno, having fallen as a result of his horse slipping, while trying to save the bundle that had been entrusted to him, he almost perished in the violent current. Our Tuscan wanderings ended in Pisa whence I was once again snatched, this time at the age of seven, and transported by sea into France. We were almost shipwrecked by winter winds not far from Marseilles and once again I was not very far from being denied a new life on its very threshold. But where am I being led, forgetful of my purpose? Since that time to the present I have had either no opportunity or a very rare one to abide anywhere or to catch my breath. As for how many kinds of dangers and fears I have encountered on my trips no one knows better than you except myself. I have enjoyed recalling some of this for you so that you Inight remember that I was born in danger and have grown old under the same conditions, provided I have now grown old and that even more painful things are not reserved for me in my old age. Such misfortunes, although common to all who enter upon life (for man's life on earth is not only like military service but like actual warfare), vary with each individual as do the battles; and while particular burdens may weigh upon each person, the fact is that the actual burdens differ considerably from one man to another. Therefore in these storms of life, to return to the point, not throwing my anchor for any length of time in any
port, and making a number of ordinary friends but unsure of how many true ones
(being uncertain of their status and not really having very many), I struck an
acquaintance with countless famous ones. I thus had to correspond a great deal
with many of them who differed considerably in character and station. As a result,
the letters were so different that in rereading them I seemed to be in constant
contradiction. Whoever has had a similar experience must confess that to be
contradictory was my only expedient. Indeed, the primary concern of a writer is to
consider the identity of the person to whom he is writing. Only in this way can he
know what and how to write, as well as other pertinent circumstances. The strong
man must be addressed in one way, the spiritless one in another, the young and
inexperienced one in still another, the old man who has discharged his life's
duties in another, and in still another manner the person puffed up with good
fortune, the victim of adversity in another, and finally in yet another manner must
be addressed the man of letters renowned for his talents, and the ignoramus who
would not understand anything you said. ...

Thus, writing entails a double labor: first to consider to whom you have
undertaken to write, and then what his state of mind will be at the time he
undertakes to read what you propose to write. These difficulties compelled me to
be very inconsistent, but I have in part escaped the censure of .. hostile critics by
availing myself of the benefits of fire, and in part by turning to you in the hope
that you would accept these letters in secret and without revealing the name of
the writer. If you cannot hide them from the few friends that remain (since
friendship has the eye of a lynx and nothing can be kept from the sight of
friends), urge those who may still have copies of these letters to destroy them
forthwith, lest they become upset at the changes I have made in the content or in
the style. For I never suspected that you would request, or that I would consent,
to gather these things into a single collection; and so, avoiding hard work, what!
had said in one letter I would often repeat in another to avail myself of what was
mine, to quote Terence. When recently they all were collected together at one
time and in one place, after having been written over many years and sent to
various regions of the world, the deformity of the collection could be easily
discerned though it was hidden in individual letters. Thus a word that had been
happily used once in a particular letter being repeated too often throughout the
collection began being troublesome. Therefore, I had to see to it that while it was
retained in one letter it was eliminated from the rest. Similarly many things having
to do with personal matters while perhaps considered a worthy insertion when
first written now appear unwarranted, notwithstanding the anxious reader's
interest. ...

Therefore you will find many things in these letters written in a friendly style to a
number of friends including yourself. At times they will deal with public and
private affairs, at times they will touch upon our griefs which supply plenty of
subject matter, or still other matters that happened to come along. In fact I did
almost nothing more than to speak about my state of mind or any other matter of
interest which I thought my friends would like to know.
...In it you will find very few letters that can be called masterpieces, and many others written on a variety of personal matters in a rather simple and unstudied manner, though sometimes, when the subject matter so requires seasoned with interspersed moral considerations, an approach observed by Cicero himself. I must confess that writing so much about so little was prompted by my fear of caustic critics who, while writing nothing noteworthy themselves, make themselves judges of the talents of others. One can avoid such impudent rashness only through silence. It is indeed an easy matter to applaud from the shore in trying to determine the skill of a helmsman. Against such impudence defend these unpolished and improvidently released pieces at least by hiding them. That other work I have been polishing with great care, though not a Phidian Minerva, as Cicero asserts, but a portrait and likeness such as it is of my talent if ever shall be able to give it the last touches, that work, I say, when it reaches you, you may set up without concern at the summit of whatever stronghold you please.

But enough of that. Another matter which I would gladly remain silent about must he mentioned. A serious disease is not easily hidden since it breaks out and becomes visible through its own peculiar features. I am ashamed of a life fallen into excessive softness. The very order of my letters will testify to this. My style was strong and sober in the early years, an indicator of a truly strong mind, of the type which was a source of comfort not only to myself but often to others. With the passage of time it became weaker and more humble and seemed to lack strength of character. It is that style especially that I beg you to try to conceal. What can one expect others to say when I myself blush at rereading those portions? Could it be that I was a man in my youth and a youth in my old age? Unfortunate and cursed perversity! My intention was either to change the order or to make entirely unavailable to you those letters which I now condemn! Neither expedient could have deceived you since you possess copies of the more doleful ones and the exact date of all of them. I, therefore, take refuge in the power of excuses. Fortune exhausted me with long and serious battles. As long as my spirit and courage lasted, I resisted it and urged others to do the same. When the enemy with her strength and attacks began to make my spirit and resistance waver, the grand style perished and I found myself descending to these lamentations which now displease me.

Perhaps the devotion of my friends will excuse me. Just knowing of their safety was sufficient to prevent me from groaning at the wounds of fate. All these friends, however, in no time at all were destroyed in almost one stroke, and when the whole world seemed to be dying it appeared inhuman rather than manly not to be moved by it. Before this time whoever heard me complain about exile or disease or litigation, about elections, or about any of the public upheavals? Whoever heard me complain about my place of birth, about ill fortune, about diminished glory, about wasted money, or about the absence of friends? In such adversities Cicero revealed himself so weak that while I take pleasure in his style
I often feel offended by his attitude. I feel the same about his contentious letters and the many quarrels and abuses that he directs against famous men upon whom he had not long before lavished praise. And I feel the same about the casualness with which he does all this. When I read his letters I feel as offended as I feel enticed. Indeed, beside myself, in a fit of anger I wrote to him as if he were a friend living in my time with an intimacy that I consider proper because of my deep and immediate acquaintance with his thought. I thus reminded him of those things he had written. that had offended me, forgetting, as it were, the gap of time. This idea became the beginning of something that made me do the same thing with Seneca after rereading after many years his tragedy entitled Octavia. Him also I reproached and thereafter, as occasion arose, I similarly wrote to Varro, Virgil and others. Some of these letters I have placed in the last portion of this work. I say this here so that the reader will not be filled with undue wonder when he comes upon them. Many of them I also threw in that bonfire of which I spoke. Just as Cicero played the role of a man in his sorrows, so did I. Today, however, so that you may know my present state of mind (nor can it be called envy if I should appropriate for myself what Seneca often says about the unskilled), I have become stronger out of that very state of despair. After all, what can frighten someone who has struggled with death so many times? "The only salvation for the vanquished is not to hope for any salvation." You will see my actions daily become more fearless and my words more bold. And should any worthy cause require a stronger style you will see style itself become more vigorous. Without question a great number of subjects will present themselves but I welcome this because for me writing and living are the same thing and I hope will be so to the very end. But although all things must have their boundaries or are expected to, the affection of friends will allow no end to this work which was begun haphazardly in my earliest years and which now I gather together again in a more advanced age, and reduce to the form of a book. For I feel impelled to answer and to correspond with them constantly, nor does the fact that I am so terribly busy serve as an excuse for avoiding this responsibility. Only then will I no longer feel this obligation and will have to consider this work ended when you hear that I am dead and that I am freed from all the labors of life. In the meantime I shall continue along the path I have been following, and shall avoid any exits so long as there is light. And the sweet labor will serve for me almost as a place of rest.

Furthermore as the rhetoricians and military leaders are wont to place their weakest parts in the middle, so I shall give to the work both a beginning and an end consisting of the most manly kinds of advice, all the more because as I grow older I seem to become stronger against the blows and injustices of fortune. Finally how I fare in the trials of life remains to be seen, for I dare not try to make any promises. This much is true, however, that right now my spirit is such that I shall never succumb to anything further. "If the world slips into destruction, the crumbling ruins will find me fearless." I want you to know that it is thus that I proceed armed with the advice of Maro and Horace, advice I formerly read about and often applauded but now, at last, in the final days of my life, I have learned to
make mine because of the necessities of unavoidable fate.

This discourse with you has been most pleasant for me and I have drawn it out eagerly and as though by design. It has kept your face constantly before me throughout a great number of lands and seas, as if in my presence until dusk, though it was with the early morning light that I had taken up my pen. But the end of the day and of this letter is now in sight. These letters, therefore, woven with multi-colored threads, if I may say so, are for you. However, if I were ever to enjoy a steady abode and the leisure time that has always escaped me, something that begins to appear possible, I would weave in your behalf a much more noble and certainly a unified web or tapestry. I should like to be numbered among those few who can promise and furnish fame; but you shall step forth into the light through your own merits. You shall be borne on the wings of your genius and shall need none of my assistance. If indeed, among so many difficulties I should manage to enjoy a measure of success, I shall make you my Idomeneus, my Atticus and my Lucilius. Farewell.

QUESTIONS
1. Why did Petrarch collect his letters?
2. How does he think about ancient writers like Cicero? Why did he write letters to some of them?
3. Does this letter seem quite truthful? Would Petrarch actually have chosen which letters to save at random?
4. What are the implications of his decision to revise the letters he chose to save?

Fam. II, 2. A letter of consolation on the misfortune of a dead and unburied friend and some thoughts concerning the rites of burial.

I grieve that you have lost a good friend but I am more upset that you seem to have lost your sense of judgment. You are consoling yourself neither in a manly nor in a philosophical fashion nor are you mourning one who deserves to be mourned, for the departure of a courageous man must appear enviable rather than sad. If I might summarize briefly the sense of your letter, you do not seem to me so much to be deplored your loss or the unexpected death of your friend (something I could perhaps forgive popular prejudice), but rather the kind of death and the injustice done to his unburied body when it was thrown into the Egyptian Sea. I cannot accept these complaints more typical of old women rather than of the rabble. Indeed I wonder whether against this scrupulous concern about kinds of burial one could not oppose that saying that being cast into a grave is a simple matter? Have you forgotten the short verses of Virgil declaring the same thing, verses that have become so familiar even to young children that they have become proverbial? But if you consider death, you deceive yourself if you believe that it makes one happy or wretched. This verse of another poet is sufficiently well-known: "One is not made wretched by death." It is life that makes people wretched or blessed, and he who has conducted it well until the flight of
his last breath stands in need of nothing more, for he is happy, secure, and in port. What sort of person, therefore, do you suppose succeeds in reaching this summit of happiness regardless of whether the earth presses him down or the sea twists him 'round or flames consume him? But since I understand you are particularly disturbed about his burial and are distressed about this more: than any other problem, how much happier do you believe is one who is plunged into this earth than another who may 'be drowned by waves? I believe that you feel as you do because of the horror created in a poem of Virgil where he said, "The waves will bear you, and the hungry fish will lick your wounds." But what if raging dogs tore his wounds, or if a pack of famished wolves tore to pieces his members after having dug up the grave? I believe you will answer, "These too would be unfortunate." Thus the most fortunate of all will be those who enjoy the unshaken, undisturbed quiet of the grave. There is nothing more childish than this idea, for when you have made provisions for all contingencies, those organs that were spared destruction by beasts you cannot deny to the hostile worms. So now please note that what you feared from perhaps the most beautiful of animals will happen necessarily from the foulest of animals. In truth the first kind are not to be feared so much since they are a daily occurrence. You see, therefore (and here I shall repeat something which I have said often and not myself only, having shared the opinion with the most illustrious philosophers), that whatever we suffer in this life that is burdensome is not so much a natural thing but the result of feebleness of our mind, or, to use the words of the philosophers, the result of the perversity of opinions. We fear new things, and take lightly customary things. Why should this be except that in the one case the unsuspecting mind is upset by the unexpected appearance of things, and in the other a shield is provided by repeated meditation or reasoning, a shield which opposes all misfortunes. Note the custom of sailors which allows that the bodies of their mates be buried at sea without concern. I cannot avoid mentioning one illustrious example out of many. Lamba Doria, a very rough and strong man, is said to have been the leader of the Genoese in that naval battle in which they first battled the Venetians and which is the most memorable ever fought in the days of our forefathers. Having sighted the enemy fleet he was aware that the hour of battle would be at hand, and although his forces were smaller, when the time came he exhorted his men with magnificent brevity, and joined battle with the enemy. When in that encounter his only son, a most handsome young man, who was stationed on the prow of the ship was the very first to be struck by an arrow and loudly mourning bystanders had encircled the fallen youth, the father rushed forth and said, "This is not the time for mourning but for fighting." Having turned subsequently to his son, he perceived no life remaining in him and said, "Dear son, never would you have enjoyed a more beautiful burial had you died in your homeland." Having said this, and though armed, he picked him up still armed and warm, and threw him into the deep. In my opinion, at least, he was most fortunate in that very calamity since he was capable of sustaining such a misfortune so manfully. And in truth that act as well as his words so enkindled the spirits of the fleet with courage that they won an outstanding victory that day. Nor was he held less compassionate than if falling upon the body and mourning effeminately he had
become incapable of action, especially in that state of affairs when the country was in such a crisis. You would tear your cheeks with your nails seeing something similar happen to your dear ones; not so much because of the sorrow of death but because of the shameful burial. Sailors, like all other men, also grieve at the loss of friends, but they bear it bravely when they are buried at sea; and this happens because they have learned to endure such things over many years. Why then do I not become indignant with Cicero because custom is stronger than reason? Could an uncultivated sailor have borne such things without tears because he had become accustomed to them while you, a learned man trained in the diure arts and supported by so great a number of examples, could not do so though relying on reason?

It would appear appropriate to observe how numerous in history are the rites used by men in conducting burial services and how thoroughly opposed to our customs they have been. Among these, certain ones used to keep the body in the home after having preserved it with the greatest care. In others, people were accustomed to cast the bodies to their dogs for the sole reason that, having bought them and reared them for a long time, according to the means of each family, they considered the stomach of a well-bred dog the best kind of burial. We also read of certain others indeed who ate the bodies themselves. Artemisia, Queen of Caria, perhaps the most famous example of conjugal love, considered nothing more appropriate for her beloved husband than upon his death to bury him in a live grave. Having cremated him and having saved his ashes with great care, she carefully sprinkled them on her drink, thereby providing the beloved with the hospitality of her own body. There is little reason for questioning Whether she acted properly. What is important is that you understand that all things that distress do so not because of themselves but because of human judgment by which they are produced and reared, and that custom counts very much in the process. The Queen fed upon the man she loved. If you were to see any of our ladies doing the same, you would be horrified and would turn your eyes from the frightening spectacle. But the same done by custom would not be called inhuman or an example of outstanding love but an ordinary act of respect. Nor is it necessary to seek only foreign examples. It was a custom of our ancestors in this very Italy to burn the dead, a custom to which the accounts of history testify as well as the discoveries that have occurred up to our own day of urns buried underground containing human ashes. Nor indeed is that a very old custom. Previously, as now, everyone was buried, until cremation was devised as a kind of remedy against the implacable hatred of the civil wars which raged even in the burial places. In that manner one was spared enemy insult through the power of fire. Thus the Scipios as statesmen who knew that they were truly valued by the state lie buried all together, nor was there anyone of the Carnelian line ever burned prior to the dictatorship of Lucius Sulla. He was the very first who, against the custom of his family and aware that he was widely hated, wished his body to be cremated fearing, as it is reported, that the followers of Marius would venture to do against him what he had done against Marius. The example had served its purpose, and others followed it who had no reason at all
for doing so. Subsequently the custom of cremating prevailed and the practice began to assume authority. Eventually what had started as a form of remedy became honorable and it became a serious shame not to abide by the custom of cremating. Hence was praised the patriotism of the man who gathered small pieces of wood on the shore of the Nile in order voluntarily to cremate the body of the great Pompey who had been shamefully beheaded. From this action he acquired a great reputation, for who would know anything about Codrus except that he had burned the body of Pompey? That other Codrus from Athens is, of course, 'known for another kind of patriotism and a peculiar death. To burn the dead today is considered an act of extreme injustice or vengeance. Whence comes this variety in one and the same people? Of course with the passage of time and the changing of customs we find changes in the opinions of men. Nor am I going to examine again what I have heard great men sometimes discuss, namely, which type of burial is more noble. There is the custom which I recall being our ancestors' and which is known to be practiced by many people even now, but with an added law that restricts burial within the city to only a few who were entirely exempt because of their unusual excellence which absolved them from such laws, and these Cicero recalls in the third book of Laws. Then there is this custom of ours which taken up from our ancestors continued as a custom of the Christian religion. To compare these two is not what I wish to do at this time. I would rather complete what I started to say, that many things seem horrible to us because through long habit we conceive many errors which are of no concern to others having different customs. If, indeed, casting aside all else, you ask me, as is appropriate to your profession, for the truth of things not according to the rumors of the rabble but according to careful reasoning, you will find my opinion to be that the wise man turns away from error and that the Swarms of fools are either to be pitied or to be laughed at. Farewell.

QUESTIONS
1. How did Petrarca seek to console his grieving friend?
2. Why did he describe a variety of burial customs drawn from the ancient past?
3. Do you suppose stories like that of Artemisia's burial of her husband would be consoling?

Fam. VI, I. "To Cardinal Annibaldo, Tusculan Bishop, against the greed of the Popes.
Maro called envy an unfortunate thing, and rightly, for what is more unfortunate than to be tormented both by one's own ills and by the good fortune of others? Indeed the remark a certain Publius jokingly directed against a certain Mutius who was renowned for his envy and his maliciousness was elegantly put; for as we read, when he saw him sadder than usual, he said: "Either something disagreeable has happened to Mutius or something good has happened to someone else." That is exactly how it is; the envious person blames his own problems on the good that has occurred to someone else, and, as Flaccus says: "He grows lean because of the wonderful things that are happening to someone else.'? To grow lean by the abundance and prosperity of others as much as by
one’s own hunger or starvation is certainly a great wretchedness. But I would not fear to assert that avarice is a more unfortunate vice than envy or than all of the other vices. Although envy frequently produces dejection, it is inactive, whereas avarice is both sad and active. Although pride always thinks something great about itself, it still takes pleasure in its false opinion; avarice always feels itself famished and wanting, nor is it ever deceived.

... I am aware that you wonder why today I wish to linger beyond custom on what some call a troublesome philosophy, However, I do not speak to you any more than I do to almost all mortals who are of your kind, and especially to those upon whom that mighty passion, as I perceive, has placed its throne and as a victor implanted its standard. I become more indignant the more unlikely appears the reason for your being a victim of cupidity. For whom do you amass these piles of gold? A legitimate posterity is denied you, frugal and moderate existence befits you best; what remains belongs to Christ's poor whom you do not fear to cheat and plunder while their lord observes from above and threatens vengeance. And you know not for whom your crime may be useful in the future because meanwhile it has become laborious and destructive and even fatal. Many excuse their conduct in the name of their children, and they cover the vice of their mind with a curtain of devotion. So do the expectant lioness and tigres become wilder after giving birth and love of new offspring arouses even tamed beasts. For you there is no excuse and no covering up of your vice. You stand naked before the eyes of the entire world, and you are pointed to with the biting reproach of all the peoples.

...Have you not read in Seneca that the gods were propitious when they were of clay? And yet the gods were certainly never propitious nor even can be, for how can one be propitious to others who is wretched within himself? I therefore do not like Seneca's opinion, only his words which I would like to apply to a happier subject. Surely Christ has always been propitious to the human race; but he was far more real when he was made of clay. Now that he is made of gold; and jewelry he is angry and does not hear our prayers because of his most understandable indignation. He does not dislike gold, but those who are hungry for wealth and whose desire and search has no end. The earliest men openly confessed what they really felt: they sought riches in order to abound in them. You seek in order to adorn Christ: a pious work indeed if he wished to be adorned with the spoils of the unfortunate: rather than with the virtue and devotion of the faithful, and if cupidity joined to lying were not more hateful to God. I have often noticed something similar among the rulers and the masters of the earth who seek books with great zeal, and search for them, seize them, buy them, not because they love letters, of which they are ignorant, but because of avarice, They seek rather to ornament their bedroom than their minds their concern was not for knowledge but for reputation, nor for the thoughts expressed in the books but for their prices. In truth they do not lack an excuse which is somewhat colored but nevertheless false. They say that they are considering then offspring and posterity, and that huge libraries are compiled according to what they say, for those who are not yet born and are uncertain about the kind of
a life they may have to lead. In truth, however, they act because of their own greed and ignorance. What is the purpose of your attempts at collecting so much? You will answer that it is to fill the temple of Christ with gold. But what do you say to the exclamation of Persius: "Oh souls bent toward earthly things and empty of celestial things, of what benefit is it to introduce your customs into the temples?" And so that you should not believe that these words are for others, hear how he immediately afterwards calls you by name: "Explain, oh Pontiffs, what gold does in the sanctuary?" Answer, oh Pontiffs, for he is speaking to you. Answer this one young man, all you elderly ones; answer this one poet, all you theologians; answer this one pagan, all you Christians. What can you say? What is gold doing in the sanctuary? If you prefer not to answer a poet, should you not at least answer the prophet who requires of you not gold but other kinds of ornaments for the temples? You read in Malachias: "The son honors the father and the slave will fear his master; if therefore I am the father, where is the honor owed me? And if I am the master, where is the fear owed me: The Lord of hosts speaks." And to let you know that he is speaking to you, he adds: "To you, oh priests, who disdain my name, do I speak." I indicate this unless there is someone who thinks that this complaint would apply more worthily to other times than the present. As I said, I see the multitude burning with avarice, and I confess that nothing can serve as an excuse, for there is no excuse for sin; if the excuse is valid, it is certainly not a sin. But the dearness of children and the manifold needs and ignorance of the multitude mitigate the crime. Oh Pontiffs, I beg you ask yourselves: what does this madness for possession avail one who lives among so many certain riches, amidst so much knowledge of human and divine things, and in a solitary and celibate life which prohibits considering the morrow? You will probably refer me to those well known words: "The Church possesses the gold." It is good if it does possess it, but very bad if it is possessed by it. The riches of men can please; men of riches definitely do not please, those men who having completed their sleep find nothing left in their hands. Therefore the answer which Persius gives to his own question is perhaps closer to the truth. When he asked a second time: "What is gold doing in the sanctuary?" he concluded: "Indeed only this, the same thing that it has done for Venus when dolls are consecrated to her by a young girl." I beseech you, therefore, let the useless gold depart from the temples and let it be contributed to the other temples of Lord, that is, for the use of men in want; let it become the love of Christ rather than the ostentation of the century; and let it not always serve idolatry under the pretext of devotion. Do you not know that avarice is the slave of idols? No people abound among so many idols, and to no one can it be said more fittingly: "Beware of idols." Believe me, oh Pontiffs, Christ could have had gold but refused it; he could have been rich when he lived among men, but he preferred poverty; he could have used vases from Corinth, but he preferred earthen jars. Do not, oh Pontiffs, seek frivolous excuses or increase the fodder of avarice in the name of Christ or as nourishment for your madness. Christ does not need your gold, nor does he take delight in your superstitions. He seeks rather the pious acts, the noble thoughts and the humble wishes of the pure and naked heart. What place is there for gold among such things? Do not, oh
unhappy ones, be concerned about how proudly you sacrifice, how elegantly, how brilliantly, but: rather how piously, how humbly, how chastely, how moderately. Sacrifice rather what the prophet king after having broken his chains sacrificed to his liberator, namely, the host of praise, and call upon the name of the Lord. Sacrifice, I say, the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of justice and hope not in gold but in the Lord. Hear the Psalmist, oh you who are hard of hearing, as he calls out day and night: "The contrite spirit, is the sacrifice worthy of God." What need is there of gold in this? The need is for the spirit, but only if it is contrite; the need is for the heart, but contrite and humble. This is the sacrifice which is pleasing to God and achievable to man without digging under the earth. The need is for a humble and unstained mind, but there is no need for either pure or unprocessed gold. I know not what more to say and fear wasting my words. But if, after the Prophet, you would not mind hearing Persius once again, see what that pagan said to his Pontiffs in those days: "Why do we not offer to the gods what great Messala's blear-eyed offspring could not offer even out of his great dish?" And in order not to leave any doubt as to what this offering to the gods was which those who were proud because of their birth and wealth, the blind sons of the wealthy, are not able to make, he subsequently defined it: "the ordered justice and right of the mind, and the holy recesses of the intellect, and a heart imbued with nobility and virtue." Striking words indeed and worthy to have been said about Christ himself. Farewell, and lend a fair ear to these faithful criticisms.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Petrarca's criticism of the cardinals and papacy?
2. What sources did he draw on to make his argument?
3. How tough a critic was he?