



Jules Elie Delaunay, The Plague in Rome  
(1869, Minneapolis Institute of Art)

*Moving Byzantium*-Lectures

Austrian Academy of Sciences & University of Vienna

## Did Pandemics foster the Rise of Christianity?

A comparative Modelling of the Antonine and Cyprianic Plagues  
in Rome and Achaea

Anestis Karasaridis

Department for the Study of Religions

Masaryk University, Brno

16 December 2021, 17:00 to 18:30 CET

Online Lecture and Discussion by Zoom

For registration, send an email to  
[ekaterini.mitsiou@univie.ac.at](mailto:ekaterini.mitsiou@univie.ac.at)



The FWF-Wittgenstein Research Programme *Moving Byzantium* at the Institute for Medieval Research/Dept. for Byzantine Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Dept. for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Vienna invites you to a virtual lecture and discussion with Anestis Karasaridis (Masaryk University, Brno). After a 45-minute lecture by Mr. Karasaridis, there will be time for discussion, moderated by Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp. For registration, please send an email to [ekaterini.mitsiou@univie.ac.at](mailto:ekaterini.mitsiou@univie.ac.at).

The virtual meeting hosted via Zoom will provide the opportunity to discuss with Anestis Karasaridis his current PhD-research on a comparative Modelling of the Antonine and Cypriatic Plagues in Rome and Achaëa: Several decades ago, Rodney Stark and William H. McNeill argued there was a causal link between pandemics in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE and the growth of Christian population. They hypothesized that the two pandemics, the Antonine Plague and the Plague of Cyprian, have caused less damage to the Christian population, setting the conditions for its unprecedented growth in the following centuries. This interpretation of the growth of Christian population, as well as the hypothesized impact of the two pandemics were however questioned by other scholars.

A research direction that might advance the current discussion surrounding the impact of the Antonine and Cypriatic Plagues on the population of the Roman Empire is to inspect the currently available sources by novel methods and assess whether Stark and McNeill's interpretation is realistic at all. Researchers in the humanities began recently to employ mathematical and computational methods on other pandemics in Antiquity with fruitful results, indicating this direction might provide interesting insights. Despite the absence of molecular evidence of the pathogens that have caused the Antonine and Cypriatic Plagues, literary and archaeological sources indicate the features of the pathogens that might have caused the pandemics and their impact on Roman society. The aim of this paper is to provide an example of how to create compartmental models of the Antonine and Cypriatic Plagues to identify the most plausible causal agent of each of them.

*Anestis Karasaridis is PhD Candidate at the Department of the Study of Religions, Masaryk University, Brno (CZ) and currently guest scholar at the Institute for Medieval Research/Department for Byzantine Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He holds a master's degree in religious studies, has professional background in software engineering and combines expertise in digital and mathematical methods with the study of antiquity.*