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The Antonine Plague: the Beginning of the End.

From the mid 160's AD the Roman Empire was ravaged by a lethal epidemic of (probably) smallpox that killed perhaps a third of its population. Recent research has begun to show that this demographic disaster inaugurated a massive economic decline. In my paper I shall document the extent of this economic discontinuity. Unlike the Black Death of the fourteenth century, the Antonine Plague did not stimulate economic innovation, but inaugurated a period of stagnation and oppression. What were the social and political trajectories and mechanisms that led to this very different outcome?