

# AFTER AUGUSTUS

## THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

# JULIO-CLAUDIANS



- TIBERIUS
- GAIUS CALIGULA
- CLAUDIUS
  - extended IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY
- NERO
  - Left administration to SENECA
  - AD 64 Great Fire of Rome
  - AD 68 Suicide





## THE GOOD EMPEROR

- work tirelessly in service to the state
- maintain public order
- defend the empire
- be sensitive to the ancient privileges
- be generous to the people
- be a competent, successful and brave general

## M. Aurelius and Commodus

- Marcus Aurelius was all these things
- His son Commodus (AD 180–192) was NOT
  - Rejected his father's lifestyle and policies
  - Extravagant, indulgent
  - Relied upon favorites
  - Associated himself with Hercules
  - Assassinated AD 192 by wrestler Narcissus

## Commodus

"Not naturally wicked but, on the contrary, as guileless as any man that ever lived. His great simplicity, however, together with his cowardice, made him the slave of his companions, and it was through them that he at first, out of ignorance, missed the better life and then was led on into lustful and cruel habits, which soon became second nature."

*Dio Cassius*



## The Tumultuous Third Century

- AD 69–192 9 emperors averaged >13 yrs
  - 7 died naturally 2 from violence
- 192–284 2 died naturally, 55 violently
- 192–235 9 emperors averaged <5 yrs
- 235–284
  - 29 ruled averaged 1.6 years
  - 19 usurpers new emperor declared every year

## THE IMPERIAL CULT

Considered:

- Dead emperors divine
  - Vespasian: “Damn. I think I am becoming a god.” (Suetonius)
- Imperial family semi-divine

ALL citizens expected make offerings to the Emperor and the Imperial Cult





## IMPERIAL PAGANISM

- mass of different temples, oracles and shrines
- often specific to the region and culture
  - water gods of the Celts
  - animal gods of the Egyptians
- often included **PAGAN MYSTERY CULTS** focused on one god above the others

## MYSTERY CULTS



- **SECRET**
  - initiation through ritual purification
  - hidden temples
  - astrology
- **Popular**
  - With decreasing stability
  - Banned in AD 394

- **INCLUSIVE**
  - Ignored status outside the cult
- **PERSONAL**
  - personal communication with god/goddess
  - personal salvation
  - encouraged personal growth and contemplation
- **Sources?**
  - Secrecy meant little **DOCUMENTARY** evidence
  - Archaeology: material evidence in temples

## MITHRAISM

- Originated in Persia
- Soldiers, bureaucrats and even slaves
  - Only men admitted to the inner mysteries
- In the Empire
  - Earliest material evidence, ca. 70AD
  - First mentioned 80AD
  - Officially sanctioned in 3rd century

## MITHRAIC TEMPLES

- Over 200 sites
- across the Empire, including England, Germany, Syria and Italy
- Cave-like, subterranean
- Common in army bases, cities



# MITHRAS



- controlled the constellations of heaven through the sacrifice of the bull of spring

# OTHER MYSTERIES

- Greek: Dionysian and Eleusian Mysteries
- Cult of Cybele
  - “Great Mother” (MATER MAGNA)
  - Originated in Anatolia with Greek/Minoan influence
  - Included women and men
- Cult of Isis
  - Originated in Egypt with Hellenic influence
  - Spread through the Empire as far as Britain
  - identified with Demeter and Ceres



## Paganism and Monotheism

- ELEVATION of one pagan deity over others was common by AD 2nd century
  - Often happy to deal with concept of a Supreme deity
- MONOTHEISM acknowledged only one Supreme deity
  - Judaism rejected the Imperial cult
  - New religion emerged from Judaism: Christianity
  - Rejection of Pagan gods ⇒ persecution

## BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Jesus:

- Jewish teacher and healer
- Born ca. 6 BC
- Attracted followers in JUDEA, a province of the Empire
- Executed ca AD 33 for sedition, as ordered by Pontius Pilate

## The QUEST FOR JESUS

- Critical analysis of documentary sources
  - Earliest ca. AD 60–100
  - Probably using earlier texts
  - Christian sources: Gospels, works of St Paul
  - Jewish sources, e.g. Josephus, AD 93
  - Roman sources: e.g. Tacitus, Suetonius
  - *Considerations*: motivations of authors, disagreements, context
- Archaeology of Israel

## Early Christianity

- Apostolic Church: Sect of Judaism
  - Led by surviving apostles and family members
  - Maintained many of the beliefs, traditions and scripture of the Jews
- Differences → split from Judaism
  - AD 50: Council of Jerusalem,
  - Work of St Paul



## Issues for the Early Church

- PERSECUTIONS
- SECRECY
- PROSLETYZING
- ORGANIZATION into bishoprics
- ORTHODOXY & HERESY
  - Huge number of different beliefs. e.g. Manichaeism, Arianism

