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Lucian on Peregrinus and Alexander of Abonuteichos: A sceptical view of two religious entrepreneurs*

The current literature on Alexander and Peregrinus suggests that many modern scholars simply follow Lucian's satirical depiction. The alternative is surely to try to locate these men in the context of their time and elicit the affordances available to enterprising individuals wanting to found their own cult (Alexander) or exploit the possibilities of a new religion (Peregrinus). At the same time, Lucian's account enables us to see what he, as an intelligent contemporary observer, thought remarkable about the activities of these men.

Around 180 CE, the social satirist Lucian published two treatises in which he took a sceptical and scathing look at the careers of two men, Peregrinus and Alexander of Abonuteichos, both of whom, above all Alexander, we would now call religious entrepreneurs.[1] The first managed to profit for a while from the Christians he had joined, whereas the second instituted an oracle and mystery-cult in his home-town of Abonuteichos/Ionopolis on the coast of Paphlagonia (Black Sea). When one looks at the current literature about these two figures, it is impossible to escape the impression that Lucian's satirical picture of them is often followed by modern scholars. Yet such a procedure prevents us from placing these men in their time and looking specifically for the affordances available to enterprising individuals to found their own cult (Alexander) or exploit the possibilities of a new religion (Peregrinus). At the same time, his account enables us to see what Lucian thought remarkable about the activities of these men. I would therefore claim that a closer study of these two entrepreneurs will help us to see the possibilities for religious initiatives in the middle and second half of the second century CE. We will start with Peregrinus (§ 1) proceed with some observations on Alexander (§ 2), and end with some conclusions

* I am most grateful to Harry Maier for his thoughtful correction of my English.

1 For the more or less contemporaneous appearance of these two treatises, see most recently Zwierlein (2010², 194).

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1. Peregrinus

One of the more fascinating figures in the history of Christianity and Judaism in the middle of the second century is undoubtedly the pagan philosopher Peregrinus of Parion,[2] a port situated in Mysia on the eastern entrance to the Hellespont.[3] His spectacular suicide in 165 CE led Lucian to dedicate a 'debunking' pamphlet, *De morte Peregrini*, to his career. After an introduction consisting of a few disparaging comments about Peregrinus, Lucian starts off by having another Cynic, Theagenes, praise him (4). This is of course ironic, since to a civilised Greek praise by a Cynic is itself a condemnation. After Theagenes has ended his speech in tears and is carried away by fellow Cynics (6), another speaker immediately takes the pulpit and starts with 'Democritean laughter' at Theagenes' 'Heraclitean tears' (7). The contrast between Democritus and Heraclitus was traditional by the late second century after having been introduced, probably, by Seneca's teacher Sotion and popularised by Seneca himself.[4] We do not know the exact meaning of this type of laughter but the suggestion that it was because of the stupidity of his fellow citizens is not implausible and would be fitting here.[5]

The identity of this second speaker, whose narrative occupies 24 sections (7–31), is not revealed. The void has of course been filled with various suggestions, starting with Jacob Bernays' idea that behind the anonymous figure we should see Lucian himself.[6] Modern critics, however, are more careful.[7] We simply do not know—perhaps Lucian deliberately omitted to give him a name so as to let the reader focus completely on the report instead of the reporter. At any rate, what he has to say about Peregrinus is not particularly elevating. In his youth, Peregrinus had been caught *in flagrante* 'in Armenia' (9),[8] from which per-

2 For a study of Peregrinus with detailed bibliographies, see Goulet-Cazé (2012); add Deeleman (1902), which contains several useful surveys of the literature before 1900; Plooij and Koopman (1915), which is more useful than Schwartz (1951), but overlooked by all the more recent notable contributions; Betz (1990); Heusch (2007); Bremmer (2007), which I freely use, but not without updates and corrections; Nesselrath (2010, 692–693); Goulet-Cazé (2014, 195–206). I have used the text by Pilhofer *et al.* (2005). My translations follow or adapt those by A. Harmon (LCL).

3 For all testimonia, see Frisch (1983, 47–96).

4 For all references, see Courtney on Iuv. 10.28–30.

5 Lutz (1954); Rütten (1992); Müller (1994); Husson (1994); Beard (2014, 92–94).

6 Bernays (1879, 5–6).

7 Hansen (2005, 131); Goulet (2012, 216f).

8 Rigsby (2004) suggests that this is a mistake, but the mention of Armenia could also mean a place far away, beyond any possibility of verification by the audience.

ilous situation he had escaped by jumping down from a roof but not before a radish had been stuffed up his bottom, the not unusual punishment for men caught in the act of adultery (Wagenvoort 1934). In the province of Asia, he had seduced a young boy, whose poor parents he had bought off with 3000 *drachmai* to avoid prosecution (9),[9] and he had even strangled his father (10), parricide being perhaps the worst crime in Greek culture.[10] Consequently, he had to leave Parion and to wander from city to city. Since Parion had erected a statue in honour of Peregrinus,[11] it is clear that Lucian, perhaps tongue in cheek, here offers outrageous evidence about his protagonist's character in order to paint him as black as possible. Yet none of it, from a present perspective, seems remotely probable, even less so as rather similar accusations recur elsewhere in Lucian's work.[12]

Directly after the enumeration of these crimes and misdemeanours, Lucian embarks on Peregrinus' Christian episode. The reader is invited to conclude that this group, in welcoming a scoundrel such as Peregrinus, must likewise be of a terrible character. Before we turn to this episode, however, I should say something about Lucian's possible sources for Peregrinus' Christian career and its chronology. Nothing is known about his immediate source, but we can at least say that he was quite well informed about early Christianity.[13] Against the traditional view,[14] more recent studies of Lucian have demonstrated that he was fairly well read in early Christian literature and almost certainly knew *The Book of Revelation*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*,[15] and, probably, the *Letters* of Ignatius in addition to one or more of the Gospels.[16] In the case of Ignatius, Otto Zwierlein has recently argued two different opinions. First, having noticed several close parallels between Lucian's *Peregrinus* and Ignatius' *Letters*, he stated that the idea of Lucian's use of the *Letters* still "im einundzwanzigsten (Jahr-

9 In the course of time, paederasty had become less and less acceptable, see Lucian, *Amores*, 28, *Alex*. 41; Buffière (1980, 485–490); Feichtinger (2006). For the conventional hyperbolic amount of 3000, see Schröder (1990, 424f).

10 Bremmer (1988², 45–53).

11 Athenag. *Leg*. 26.4–5.

12 Cf. Lucian *Pseudol.* 20, 22; *Alex*. 4, 6; *Iupp. Trag.* 52.

13 So, rightly, Jones (1986, 122): "His knowledge, however it was acquired, is on some points surprisingly exact"; similarly, Karavas (2010).

14 Most recently still Goulet-Cazé (2014, 204).

15 Cf. Von Möllendorff (2005, 179–194) and (2000, 427–430).

16 For possible references to the Gospels in *Peregrinus*, perhaps not all persuasive, see König (2006); also Ramelli (2015), who interestingly compares the question by Zeus in *Icaromenippus* 24 'Εἰπέ μοι, Μένιππε,' ἔφη, 'περὶ δὲ ἐμοῦ οἱ ἄνθρωποι τίνα γνώμην ἔχουσι;' with the question by Jesus in Mark 8:27 'Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;' (see also Matt. 16:13–23; Luke 9:18–22).

hundert) eine gewisse Attraktivität behält", but, in the end, he concluded that the parallels "sich wohl besser als Reflex der zeitgenössischen Sprachidiomatik erklären", although it is difficult to see how the *Zeigeist* could explain these verbal parallels.[17] Subsequently, in his most recent book, Zwierlein compares Lucian, *Pereg.* 41 with Ignatius, *Pol.* 7.2:

> Lucian: φασὶ δὲ πάσαις σχεδὸν ταῖς ἐνδόξοις πόλεσιν ἐπιστολὰς διαπέμψαι αὐτόν, διαθήκας τινὰς καὶ παραινέσεις καὶ νόμους· καί τινας ἐπὶ τούτῳ πρεσβευτὰς τῶν ἑταίρων *ἐχειροτόνησεν*, **νεκραγγέλους καὶ νερτεροδρόμους** προσαγορεύσας.
>
> Ignatius: Πρέπει, Πολύκαρπε θεομακαριστότατε, συμβούλιον ἀγαγεῖν θεοπρεπέστατον καὶ *χειροτονῆσαί* τινα, ὃν ἀγαπητὸν λίαν ἔχετε καὶ ἄοκνον, ὃς δυνήσεται **θεοδρόμος** καλεῖσθαι· τοῦτον καταξιῶσαι, ἵνα πορευθεὶς εἰς Συρίαν δοξάσῃ ὑμῶν τὴν ἄοκνον ἀγάπην εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ.

Zwierlein notes the close parallels but then concludes that Ignatius, or perhaps 'Ignatius', has parodied Lucian instead of the other way round.[18] This is highly improbable, as all the other passages noted by him are really close verbal parallels and, unlike Lucian, Ignatius is not known as a satirist.[19] Moreover, Lucian's interest in Christianity is also demonstrated by the fact that recently a notice from Lucian has been discovered in an Arabic text, in which he seems to make fun of Christian glossolalia.[20] Can it be that Lucian had become acquainted with or heard of the Montanists, who started to appear shortly after 180 CE? Or was he aware of other Christian prophets? Celsus (*apud* Orig. *CCels.* 7.9), too, seems to refer to glossolalia when mentioning that wandering prophets add to their promises 'strange, frantic, and completely unintelligible words'. In any case it is worth observing that Lucian also ascribes a kind of glossolalia to Alexander the false prophet who, "uttering, a few meaningless words like Hebrew or Phoenician, dazed the people, who did not know what he was saying save only that he everywhere brought in Apollo and Asclepius" (*Alex.* 13).

Until recently there was no firm evidence regarding the chronology of Lucian's stay in Palestine, but the publication of new military diplomas has enabled Werner Eck plausibly to identify the "governor of Syria, a man fond of phi-

17 Zwierlein (2010², 194–201).

18 Zwierlein (2014, 2.405–407). Better: Waldner (2006, 118).

19 See also Goulet-Cazé (2012, 226), who, like several scholars in previous centuries, recognises that Lucian had actually read Ignatius. For an interesting onomastic argument for the authenticity of Ignatius' *Letters*, see Huttner (2015).

20 Strohmaier (2012) and (2013), but note the different translation by Pormann (2012, 10). For the very early history of Montanism, which unfortunately cannot be dated precisely, see most recently Ramelli (2005: on Montanism in *Peregrinus*); Markschies (2012); Mitchell (2013).

losophy" who released Peregrinus from prison (14), with Sergius Paullus, who was the *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Syria in 144 CE and whose philosophical interests are well established.[21] The location of the prison is not given by Lucian, but it may well have been Caesarea Maritima, the capital of the province and the seat of the Roman governor's *praetorium*. The city was large and prosperous, and must have had a sizable Christian congregation early on, as Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.22) mentions its bishop Theophilus in a list of prominent church-leaders already under Commodus. A person like Peregrinus might well have expected an audience in such a city for his teachings.[22] The year 144 is very important, as it gives us a firm anchor in a sea of uncertainty. Recent studies have questioned the dating of the Gospels (Vinzent 2014), the ascription of his *Letters* to Ignatius, and the text of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.[23] On the other hand, *Peregrinus* now supplies us with a place (perhaps Caesarea) and a date (144 CE). So what does Lucian tell us about Christianity and Peregrinus around that time?

Let us start by noting that Peregrinus is depicted as of no fixed abode. He "roamed about, going to one country after another" (10) until he came into contact with Christians in Palestine (11). It is rather striking that Lucian uses the phrase 'the wondrous wisdom of the Christians' (11), since the name 'Christian' for Jesus-followers must have been relatively rare at the time, as the scarcity of testimonies in earlier inscriptions and papyri shows.[24] The typically Cynic habit of itinerancy may have made it easier to be taken as a Christian, as wandering prophets are still known both to the *Didache* (11.4–6 Wengst) and to Celsus (*apud* Orig. *CCels.* 7.9), although they clearly no longer exist in the time of Origen (*CCels.* 7.11).[25] A certain affinity of Cynicism with early Christianity has often been noted,[26] and this may have made the transition to Christianity easier for Peregrinus.

It is also noteworthy that Lucian does not mention anything about Jews but uses a curious terminology for the 'clergy' of these Christians. He calls them τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν καὶ γραμματεῦσιν αὐτῶν, 'their priests and scribes' (11), whereas the

21 Eck and Pangerl (2014); Eck (2014a).

22 Levine (1975); Holum (1999); Turnheim and Ovadiah (2002); Eck (2014b, 150–162).

23 Ignatius and Polycarp: see most recently Waldner (2006, 101–104); Zwierlein (2014, vol. 2 *passim*).

24 Bremmer (2002, 105–108); add *Acta Abitiniarum* 5.7.10 and 13–18; Canart and Pintaudi (2004–05, 197 [*c.* 3]); see also Hegedus (2004); Horrell (2007); Luijendijk (2008, 38–40); Bile and Gain (2012).

25 In general, see also Bremmer (2016); see also Esther Eidinow's contribution to this volume (Chapter 10).

26 See most recently Downing (1993); Montiglio (2005, 180–203); Goulet-Cazé (2012, 228–229) and (2014).

New Testament always uses the combination οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς.[27] We do find οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ in an enumeration of Jewish offices in Flavius Josephus (*AJ* 12.142), but the closest parallel is perhaps to be found in the *Protevangelium of James*, a probably Syro-Christian treatise of the later second century that displays a clear, apparently Jewish, concern with purity.[28] It mentions ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς καὶ τοὺς γραμματεῖς (6), but the Jewish context of these terms in the *Protevangelium* makes it hazardous to see these as a contemporary Christian parallel. In any case, is the presence of 'priests and scribes' plausible in a Christian congregation? We know that, despite the decimation of the priestly and scribal ranks after the two Jewish revolts, scribes continued to function as copyists of Torah scrolls and as teachers of children, whereas priests remained the authorities on Jewish law.[29] As the latter are well attested in some parts of Palestine as late as the third and fourth centuries, though not in Roman Caesarea,[30] the terminology probably points to one of the Christian congregations in Palestine and Syria that still clung to parts of its Jewish inheritance (Kimelman 1999).

There may be two further indications that Peregrinus had indeed joined such a group. First, Lucian mentions that his congregation had made him their *prostatês*, which is a title that occurs in several Jewish communities, but is certainly not exclusively Jewish.[31] Although early Christianity derived some of its vocabulary from the political sphere, such as *ekklêsia*, *politeuô*, *politeuma*, *leitourgia* and *chorêgia*,[32] and in many cities the *prostatai* were the highest civic magistrates in the Hellenistic period,[33] Lucian will probably have used the term here in its more general meaning of 'president, presiding officer' rather than in a political sense.[34] Secondly, Lucian's account of Peregrinus' apostasy seems to presuppose that he did indeed belong to an actual group. After he had returned to his home town Parion where he gave all his possessions to the city (14–15), Peregrinus again took to the road. Lucian does not tell us exactly where he went, but it seems reasonable to surmise that he returned to the groups that had received him earlier. Here he was once again treated generously but "after he

27 Matt. 2:4; 16:21; 20:18 etc.

28 Nicklas (2014, 191–195).

29 Trebilco (1991, 50, 210 note 45 [priests]); Hezser (1994, 467–475 [scribes], 480–489 [priests]).

30 Grey (2011). But note that Orig. (*CCels.* 1.49–57) mentions a dispute with a rabbi.

31 Ameling (2004, 93), overlooked by Pilhofer (2005, 61–62); Williams (2013, 127, 132).

32 Hilhorst (1988), overlooked by Van Kooten (2012); see also Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli's contribution in this volume (Chapter 12)

33 Fabiani (2010, 472–476 [with most recent bibliography]).

34 For *prostatês* as a leader, see Strubbe on *I. Pessinous* 170.

had transgressed in some way even against them—he was seen, I think, eating some of the food that is forbidden them— they no longer accepted him" (16). The transgression suggests that Peregrinus was part of a congregation that still maintained certain dietary precepts of the Torah (Van der Horst 2012), although the precise *halakha*-rules are of course unknown. It seems clear that *Peregrinus* is a valuable, albeit usually neglected source for a certain form of Jewish Christianity in the middle of the second century. We shall shortly learn more about its actual doctrines (§ 1.3).

Lucian clearly does not rate the 'priests and scribes' of this congregation very highly for he notes that in no time Peregrinus showed himself superior to them "for he was prophet, leader of a *thiasos*, head of a religious association, and everything, all by himself" (11).[35] P*rophêtês* here probably means the 'manager of an oracle',[36] as the other two terms also suggest the leadership of a religious institution. Although it is a *hapax*,[37] a *thiasarchês* must mean 'head of a *thiasos*'. Though *thiasos* occurs most often as a term for a Dionysiac association,[38] we hear of *thiasoi* of Jews,[39] of Heracles,[40] of the Mater Oureia (*SEG* 41.1329 A.4), of the Agathodaimôn (*SEG* 48.1120), of Hekate (*SEG* 57.779), of the Theos Hypsistos (*CIRB* 1259), of the followers of Sarapis (*SEG* 55.1463bis = *RICIS* Suppl. 2, 306/1601; *RICIS* 202/0135 and 0801; 306/0601) and of Isis (*RICIS* 204/1008) are well attested.[41] Finally, *synagôgeus* was a term used to denote the founder or chairperson of a religious or professional association (*SEG* 57.1701; Poland [1932], 1317–18). The term has a merely facultative connection with Judaism,[42] and is not used in connection with a synagogue.[43] Jones states that Lucian sees "Christianity through Greek eyes", pointing out that these

35 For some good observations, see Goulet (2012, 224–225) and (2014, 197–203).

36 Cf. Bremmer (2001, 421–422); add the fairly rare personal name Prophetes (*SEG* 54.1144, 56.768); Busine (2006), *passim*.

37 The related verb *thiasarcheô* seems to occur only twice: *OGIS* 529.5 = *IosPE* I^2 425.11; *IGR* III.115 = *EA* 13 (1989) 65, 10: both honorific decrees come from Pontus and Paphlagonia, cf. Le Guen and Rémy (2010, 102).

38 Jaccottet (2003) vol. 2, *passim*, cf. index s.v.

39 Cf. Scheid (2003), 66 n.31; add *CIRB* 1260–1261, 1277–1287, 1289; Philo, *Probus* 85 (Essenes); Goulet-Cazé (2014, 199).

40 *IG* II^2 2345; *SEG* 51.224; Lambert (1999).

41 Many more different *thiasoi* on Cos: *SEG* 57.776 s.v. Associations, 777–789. For its use in Christianity, see Bartelink (1979).

42 Sokolowski (1955), no. 80.10 (*Sabbatistai*), but see also *I. Delos* 1641 b 6; *I. Perge* 294 and 321; *I. Istros* 193 (= *SEG* 1.330); *SEG* 24.1055 (Moesia), 34.695 (Tomis).

43 Rightly stressed by Goulet-Cazé (2014, 200).

terms have no place in early Christianity.[44] That is certainly true, but Lucian is not concerned here with an exact description of the structure of a Christian congregation. He evidently wants to make Peregrinus' prominent position within the Christian community clear to his readers by referring to leadership roles in religious institutions familiar to them.[45]

Now what aspects of these Christian communities does Lucian think it worth stressing to his readers? In the next section we will take a brief look at (1) books, (2) charity and (3) the doctrines and practices of the Christian 'new cult' (11).

1.1. Books

Lucian refers to books twice in his account. As soon as Peregrinus had become the most important person in the congregation, "he interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many" (11) and in his prison "their sacred books were read aloud" (12). Now literacy was of course not unknown to the pagan religious world. Hymns, tragedies, novels, aretalogies,[46] Orphic gold leaves, Sibylline Books, the textualisation of oracles such as Delphi, Didyma and Dodona, the *commentarii* of the Roman priestly colleges or the books by Cicero and Seneca on religion – to mention only a few of the many examples that could be cited – all attest to the importance of texts for Greek and Roman religion.[47]

Yet there was no authoritative pagan 'holy book',[48] whereas in the emergent Christian religion books were central and authoritative, as John Kloppenborg has recently argued in an illuminating article. He notes that in a number of early Christian *Acta martyrum* the future martyr appears before the Roman judge with 'books and letters of Paul, a righteous man' (*Passio Scillit.* 12), 'the book of the divine Gospels' (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 7.15.4), or 'the holy Gospels' (*Acta Eupli* 1.1). Martyrs can even be in the possession of 'so many parchments, books, tablets, codices and pages of writings of the former Christians of unholy name' (*Mart. Agape* etc. 5, transl. Kloppenborg). This may help to explain Lu-

44 Jones (1986, 122).

45 This is not understood by Pilhofer (2005, 58–60, 102).

46 See now Jördens (2013); Bremmer (2013).

47 As is well stressed by Gordon (2012, 145–147); see also Lardinois (2011); Woolf (2012); Bremmer (2015).

48 For the expression, see Bremmer (2010).

cian's emphasis on the role of books in Peregrinus' performance. [49] The spread of a book culture among the early Christians was clearly facilitated by the introduction of the codex, although we can only speculate about the underlying reasons for the media revolution that caused this change.[50] In any case, it now seems clear that the early Christians not only popularised a handier format for books, but they also facilitated public reading by introducing a series of features that made that reading easier, such as wider margins, fewer letters per line and the use of spaces between words.[51]

As for Lucian's remark about Peregrinus interpreting Christian texts, we have a more or less contemporary account for the probable place of this interpretation. Justin Martyr tells us:

> And on the day called for the sun, there is a common gathering of all who live in cities or in the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time allows. Next, after the reader has stopped, the president admonishes and encourages with a speech to imitate these good things (*Apol*. 67.3–4, tr. Kloppenborg).

Kloppenborg nowhere refers to Lucian, but Peregrinus was probably a 'president' of this kind, who interpreted the Scriptures in the church or congregational services. In Rome, these Scriptures, presumably, included Gospels, Letters of Paul and books of the Old Testament, and there is no reason not to suppose the same for Peregrinus' congregation. If we accept the *First Letter to Timothy* as a text of around the middle of the second century, we have another testimony for here we find the admonition 'to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhorting, to teaching' (4.13). In fact, teaching was an important part of the emerging Christian religion and one of the main differences from traditional Graeco-Roman religion.[52]

There is no surviving evidence for Peregrinus as a Christian author. Admittedly, Pilhofer has suggested we read the title --]γρίνου ἀπολογίαι in a third-century list of books as [Περε]γρίνου ἀπολογίαι, which he interprets as *Apologies of Peregrinus*.[53] However, it is quite unclear what might have stood before the letters

49 Kloppenborg (2014); see also Schnelle (2015). For interesting reflections on Christian literacy, see also Stroumsa (2003), (2005), (2012) and (2014).

50 See most recently Bremmer (2010, 348–349); Wallraff (2013, 8–25).

51 See Hurtado (2006) and (2011); Kloppenborg (2014, 45–68).

52 Judge (1960–61); Harl (1993, 417–431) ('Église et enseignement dans l'Orient grec au cours des premiers siècles', 1977[1]); Smith (2012).

53 Pilhofer (2005, 98–100), but add to his rather incomplete bibliography: Zereteli (1925), no. 22; *Corpus dei papiri filosofici* 1.1.1 (Florence: Olschki, 1989) no. 2; Otranto (2000), no. 15; Fuentes González (2005, 713–714); Houston (2014, 54 (most recent photo)). I am most grateful

PINOY, and none of the other recent editions suggests the same solution. It would indeed be odd if the Christians or pagans had taken the trouble to preserve an apology of an apostate.

1.2. Charity

Lucian devotes some attention to the way the Christians cared for Peregrinus when he was arrested and thrown into prison. Naturally he does not omit the chance to denigrate him by suggesting that he gained fame and money from his time in prison (12–13), but his emphasis on the details imply that Peregrinus' treatment struck him as unusual. So what does he note in particular? We know of course that prisons regularly occur in the *Acts of the Apostles:* Peter is liberated miraculously from prison by an angel (12), Paul and Silas could have escaped if they wanted to (16), the Lord visits Paul in prison (23) and Paul is put under house-arrest instead of having to stay in a dark, damp prison (28). Although the date of *Acts* is highly uncertain, these references do suggest that prisons played an important role in the life of the early Christians, which seems to presuppose a time of persecution, but that is all we can say.

Unfortunately, Lucian does not tell us why Peregrinus was arrested. However, it seems likely that it was because he was a Christian; his being called 'a new Socrates' (12) suggests a pending execution.[54] In any case, Lucian is clearly surprised at the reactions of the Christians: they first try to get him released but when that fails, they bring him food and bribe the guards so that their persons in charge even sleep together with him in prison (12). To us it may seem odd that the Roman authorities would not immediately have arrested these more prominent Christians, but we find a similar situation in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (3.5) where Perpetua mentions that the deacons Tertius and Pomponius had bribed the guards to let her stay in the better part of the prison for a few hours,[55] and visits to imprisoned Christians by their fellow worshippers are well attested in the *Acta martyrum*.[56] However, when one looks at the way Lucian

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to Peter van Minnen for his help with this documentation. Note that Wilken in Mitteis & Wilken (1912, 183) claimed that the γ is unclear and declined Jernstedt's suggestion that the name was Nigrinus, whereas Zereteli (1925, 156–157) accepted the reference and claimed that he could see the γ but neither the preceding nor the following letters!

54 For the name, see Harnack (1906, 17–49), criticised by Geffcken (1908); Benz (1950/1); Döring (1979, 143–161); Dassmann (1993, 39); Baumeister (2009, 22–28).

55 For bribery of this kind, see Bremmer (1996, 48 note 45); Krause (1996, 305–308).

56 Pavón (1999, 111–112) ('Las visitas').

uses 'sleeping together with' in the rest of his work, one cannot quite suppress the impression that there is a subtle hint here of sexual impropriety as well.[57]

Moreover, early in the morning one could see γρᾴδια, χήρας τινὰς καὶ παιδία ὀρφανά, "old women, some widows and even orphaned children" (12),[58] standing at the gates of the prison, presumably waiting for the guards to admit them. In contrast to the pagan world, widows and old women were important groups in the early Church,[59] and it is this contrast with his own world that must have struck our satirist as important to note down for his readers. There may even be here a subtle jibe at the name 'new Socrates', as Plato (*Phaed*. 59d) describes how Socrates' friends also early in the morning (ἕωθεν) waited at the prison to keep Socrates company.[60] Lucian is also struck by the speed with which the Christians reacted to the arrest of one their number. According to him, congregations from Asia Minor actually sent people to help, defend and to comfort Peregrinus (13). One is reminded of Paul's *Letter to the Philippians* in which he relates that he received help from the Philippians while in prison. In any case, this type of moral and material support also points to the interregional contacts of the early Christians. In those early days of the emerging Church Christians clearly felt the need to help their brothers and sisters in distress. This solidarity may also be one of the reasons for the success of the movement.

1.3. Doctrines and practices

After mentioning the books, Lucian proceeds with 'and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a president, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine'.[61] Unfortunately, the text is problematic. Our manuscripts read ἐπεγράφον τὸν μέγαν γοῦν, which Cobet emended to ἐπεγράφοντο, μετὰ γοῦν, which has been accepted in our main editions. But as Van der Horst (2012) ob-

57 Lucian, *Alex*. 7, 41; *Dial. Meret*. 6, etc.

58 For this type of asyndeton (A, B, and C) in Greek see Denniston (1954, 289–90) (thanks to Stefan Radt for this reference). Like Harmon (LCL), Pilhofer (2005, 23) translates as 'alte Witwen und Waisenkinder', and, curiously, sees these as deaconesses (62–63).

59 For widows, see most recently Bruno Siola (1990); Krause (1994–195); Bremmer (1995); Recchia (2003, 107–136) ("Le vedove nella letteratura istituzionale dell'antico cristianesimo e nella tipologia biblica"). Old women: Bremmer (1987).

60 As observed by Szlagor (2005, 96–97).

61 Luc. *Peregr*. 11: καὶ ὡς θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνοι ἠδοῦντο καὶ νομοθέτῃ ἐχρῶντο καὶ προστάτην ἐπεγράφοντο, μετὰ γοῦν ἐκεῖνον ὃν ἔτι σέβουσι, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ἀνασκολοπισθέντα.

serves, it hardly makes sense. The precise sense is thus uncertain. Yet it seems to me that Lucian here represents Peregrinus as a second Jesus. He was worshipped as a god (11), they used him as lawgiver (11) and somewhat later he calls Jesus their 'first lawgiver' (13),[62] and he is their 'president' – all apparently like Jesus, whom Lucian does not mention by name, though he knows he was crucified in Palestine. But the doctrine that strikes Lucian most is the fact that the Christians believe:

> [...] that they are going to be wholly immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and most of them even willingly give themselves up. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have converted once,[63] by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living according to his laws.[64] Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines without any definite evidence (13).[65]

We will not discuss in detail these doctrines as they are well known. It may suffice here to note that Lucian translates the belief in the resurrection of the body into his own pagan language,[66] and considers this doctrine responsible for the phenomenon of voluntary martyrdom, which baffled Greeks and Romans.[67] Just like Celsus (*apud* Orig. *CCels*. 5.14), Lucian clearly thinks the idea ridiculous. But it is interesting to note that he also observes a certain 'communism' amongst these Christians. One can only wonder if this was a reality or if Lucian had heard or read about the beginning of Christianity as related in *Acts* (2.42–47, 4.32–37). And is it by chance that we find the same idea in two other early treatises that

62 For Jesus as lawgiver, see Hvalvik (2006).

63 For the brotherhood, see Bremmer (2006, 272–273).

64 The term 'sophist' here is here hardly meant positively, though some have taken it as such, cf. Wyss (2014).

65 Luc. *Peregr*. 13: πεπείκασι γὰρ αὐτοὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἀθάνατοι ἔσεσθαι καὶ βιώσεσθαι τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον, παρ' ὃ καὶ καταφρονοῦσιν τοῦ θανάτου καὶ ἑκόντες αὐτοὺς ἐπιδιδόασιν οἱ πολλοί. ἔπειτα δὲ ὁ νομοθέτης ὁ πρῶτος ἔπεισεν αὐτοὺς ὡς ἀδελφοὶ πάντες εἶεν ἀλλήλων, ἐπειδὰν ἅπαξ παραβάντες θεοὺς μὲν τοὺς Ἑλληνικοὺς ἀπαρνήσωνται, τὸν δὲ ἀνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφιστὴν αὐτὸν προσκυνῶσιν καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἐκείνου νόμους βιῶσιν. καταφρονοῦσιν οὖν ἁπάντων ἐξ ἴσης καὶ κοινὰ ἡγοῦνται, ἄνευ τινὸς ἀκριβοῦς πίστεως τὰ τοιαῦτα παραδεξάμενοι.

66 For the belief in salvation and condemnation as Christian religious capital, see Bremmer (2006, 277–278). For the interest of Greek and Roman intellectuals in the resurrection, see Bowersock (1994, 99–119); Schmidt (1995). For the rise of the belief in bodily resurrection, see Bremmer (2002, 41–55).

67 For voluntary martyrdom, see Butterweck (1995); Voisin (2005); Birley (2006); Dearn (2006); de Ste. Croix (2006, 153–200) (the chapter was composed in the 1950s, but never published; the notes have been well updated); Moss (2012).

are often seen as deriving from a Jewish-Christian milieu: the *Didache* (4.8) and the *Epistle of Barnabas* (19.18a)?

There is no mention in *Peregrinus* of Jews nor is there an explicitly Jewish element in Lucian's account of Peregrinus' early Christian congregation. For him, the Christians in 144 CE were clearly a quite different group, even if their leader came from Palestine. Contrary to a popular trend in modern scholarship,[68] Al Baumgarten and John Barclay have recently noted that all early pagan authors, with the exception of Galen (Ramelli 2003), see the Christians as distinct from the Jews,[69] and Maren Niehoff has convincingly argued that the Jew in Celsus as quoted by Origen must have been a highly educated, probably Alexandrian, scholar who perceived Christianity as a separate religion that clearly was attractive to a number of his fellow Jews.[70] These recent studies persuasively argue that the so-called parting of the ways had taken place relatively early, although this process may have taken place in different places at different rates. In some places, this may have been very late, since the earliest Christian diatribes against the Jews only appear around 170 CE; moreover, the first one known to us, by Bishop Apollinaris of Hierapolis, could still be entitled *To the Jews*, instead of the later popular title *Against the Jews*.[71]

The 'parting of the ways' did not not necessarily mean that the practices and beliefs of some (many?) Christians were not still very Jewish. There must have been many different shades of Christianity, and the situation in heavily Jewish areas surely will have been different from areas with very few Jews. We should assume that the two religions long continued to be in some kind of dialogue, although research into Christian influence on early Judaism is still in its initial stages.[72] In the case of Peregrinus we may reasonably suppose that he was part of a congregation with several Jewish features (above), which in Palestine would not be surprising, but that is as far as we can go.

There is one more element in Lucian's account that deserves our attention. He calls Christianity a 'new *teletê*' (11).[73] Now the term *teletê* can mean anything

68 See especially Segal (1986); Becker and Yoshiko Reed (2003); Boyarin (2004).

69 Barclay (2013); Baumgarten (2013); note also Shaw (2015, 97), in an otherwise unpersuasive study of the Neronian persecution. Aelius Aristides (*On the Defence of the Four* 2.394) refers to "the blasphemous people of Palestine", thus making it very difficult to say whether he is referring to Christians or Jews, cf. Benko (1980, 1055–1115 at 1098).

70 Niehoff (2013); see also Baumgarten (2013, 408–418).

71 Huttner (2013, 244–253).

72 But see Schäfer (2010).

73 The text of this subordinate clause is less certain than we would like, cf. Schirren (2005), but his idea that *teletê* refers to the crucifixion is unpersuasive.

from a ritual in general to a mystery-cult,[74] but at least in the case of Pausanias, an author more or less contemporary with Lucian, *teletê* is used almost exclusively in relation to mysteries. Although this is not the case with Lucian, he does often use the word to mean 'mysteries'.[75] Moreover, there is a clear indication that Lucian indeed saw early Christianity as a kind of mystery-cult. As I have pointed out, in addition to their material assistance, Peregrinus' group is said to have read *logoi hieroi* with him in prison (12). In Philo, *hieroi logoi* refer to the Torah and divinely inspired words or thoughts, whereas in the Church Fathers they refer to the Old and New Testament,[76] but Lucian will have meant the term here in the normal pagan usage that is, texts associated specifically with, especially, Orphic mysteries.[77] Celsus too compared Christianity to 'the other *teletai*' (Orig. *CCels.* 3.59), just as several Christians, orthodox and heterodox, had been struck by the similarity of some elements of the Christian ritual, such as baptism and the Eucharist, with those of the mysteries.[78]

Obviously, more could be said about Peregrinus and Lucian's report of earlier Christianity, but this may suffice for our purpose. Let us now turn to a different entrepreneur who seems to have caught the *Zeitgeist* in a remarkable manner.

2. Alexander and the mysteries

As we saw in the introduction, the *Peregrinus* was probably written at much the same time as Lucian's pamphlet about Alexander of Abonuteichos, *Alexander or a False Seer*, perhaps the most famous religious entrepreneur of antiquity after the apostle Paul.[79] It would exceed the bounds of this contribution to discuss the whole of this treatise, of which I accept the basic historicity.[80] I will limit

74 Dunbabin (2008); Schuddeboom (2009).

75 Lucian *Demon.* 11 and 34; *Merc.* 1; *Alex.* 38; *Pereg.* 28; *Salt.* 15; *Pseudol.* 5; *Nav.* 15.

76 Bremmer (2010, 336–354).

77 Henrichs (2003, 212–216); at p. 215, he notes that Lucian, *Astrol.* 10 associates γοητεία καὶ ἱερολογία with the name of Orpheus; Bremmer (2010, 331–333).

78 Auffarth (2006); cf. Bremmer (2014, 156–161).

79 See most recently Bordenache Battaglia (1988); Sfameni Gasparro (2002, 149–202) (combination of two articles published in 1996 and 1999); Chaniotis (2002); Pozzi (2003); Elm (2006); Gordon (2013, 155–161); Sfameni Gasparro (2013), with a list of her many studies of Alexander in the bibliography; Perea Yébenes (2013). I generally follow the text of Victor (1997) and once again use and adapt the translation by A. Harmon (LCL).

80 I do not share the scepticism in this regard of Bendlin (2011, 226–243) (originally published in 2006, but here with an important 'Afterword (2009)'. Neither he nor others before him seem to me to have put forward convincing arguments for a purely fictional character of the treatise.

myself to one passage, which has not yet received a proper detailed discussion, where we can see Alexander at work in expanding his new cult by introducing new mysteries. Once again our main information comes from Lucian. He had probably visited Abonuteichos in 161 CE (Flinterman 1997), but wrote his treatise shortly after 180 CE when Alexander had already been dead for about a decade. Lucian seems amazingly well informed. He spoke to Alexander himself (55) and, presumably, to one or more of his close collaborators. It is part of Lucian's literary technique to 'zoom in' on Alexander and largely ignore his entourage, but it is clear that Alexander could not have operated his oracle and mysteries without the dedicated cooperation of a number of people. Did Lucian perhaps talk to a disgruntled follower of Alexander?[81] Or to people from the entourage of P. Mummius Sisenna Rutilianus or even M. Sedatius Severianus, after the latter's disastrous invasion of Armenia in 161 CE, allegedly on the basis of a favourable oracle by Glykon?[82]

Having instituted an oracle of the snake god Glykon and spread its fame all over the Roman Empire,[83] Alexander also instituted a mystery-cult in his hometown Abonuteichos (38–40).[84] Lucian begins his account as follows:

> He established a mystery-cult, with the priestly offices of dadouch and hierophant,[85] which was to be held annually, always for three days in succession. On the first day, as at Athens, there was a proclamation, worded as follows: 'If any atheist or Christian or Epicurean has come to spy upon the rites, let him flee, but let those who believe in the god perform the mysteries, under the blessing of good fortune'. Then, at the very outset, there was an 'expulsion', in which he took the lead, saying: 'Out with the Christians!', and the whole multitude chanted in response, 'Out with the Epicureans!'[86]

Right at the beginning Lucian gives us the key to a better understanding of these mysteries, as the offices of dadouch and hierophant are taken from the Eleusini-

81 The scepticism of Petsalis-Diomidis (2010, 43–45) goes too far.

82 Severianus: Lucian, *Alex*. 27; *PIR*^{2} S 231 (see also Esther Eidinow's contribution in this volume (Chapter 10)).

83 The classic study of Glykon is Robert (1980, 393–421). For further bibliography, see Oesterheld (2008, 129–136); Bendlin (2011, 233); Ogden (2013, 325–29).

84 Note that Levieils (2007, 345) wrongly locates these Mysteries 'en Italie'.

85 For the combination of *dadouchia* and *hierophantia* as constitutive for the Eleusinian Mysteries, cf. Plut. *Conv. sept. sap*. 1.4.3, 621C.

86 Luc. *Alex*. 38: τελετήν τε γάρ τινα συνίσταται καὶ δᾳδουχίας καὶ ἱεροφαντίας, τριῶν ἐξῆς ἀεὶ τελουμένων ἡμερῶν. καὶ ἐν μὲν τῇ πρώτῃ πρόρρησις ἦν ὥσπερ Ἀθήνησι τοιαύτη· 'Εἴ τις ἄθεος ἢ Χριστιανὸς ἢ Ἐπικούρειος ἥκει κατάσκοπος τῶν ὀργίων, φευγέτω· οἱ δὲ πιστεύοντες τῷ θεῷ τελείσθωσαν τύχῃ τῇ ἀγαθῇ'. εἶτ' εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐξέλασις ἐγίγνετο· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἡγεῖτο λέγων '῎Εξω Χριστιανούς', τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἅπαν ἐπεφθέγγετο '῎Εξω Ἐπικουρείους'.

an mysteries.[87] Yet the duration and structure of the mysteries were different. There were no two grades as in Eleusis: Alexander obviously did not think people would make the arduous journey to Abonuteichos twice. Yet he took over from Eleusis the idea of spreading initiation over several days. As at Athens, there was an initial proclamation, but whereas in Athens the announcement was made several days before the procession to Eleusis, in Abonuteichos it took place immediately before the rite began (there seems to have been no starting procession, although the beginning will have been dramatised in some manner). Moreover, we do not hear in Athens of an ἐξέλασις, 'expulsion', but Philo's words in his *De fuga* (85), ἐλαύνετε οὖν, ἐλαύνετε, ὦ μύσται καὶ ἱεροφάνται θείων ὀργίων, τὰς μιγάδας καὶ σύγκλυδας καὶ πεφυρμένας, δυσκαθάρτους καὶ δυσεκπλύτους ψυχάς, suggest that Alexander based himself here on current mystery language.[88] Moreover, the proclamation also reminds us of the language of exorcism, where it was customary to bid harmful spirits to 'be off' (φεῦγε).[89]

Rather surprisingly, in view of the fact that Christians were often accused of atheism, the *atheoi* are here a separate category.[90] But we find all three categories already earlier in the treatise. When his Glykon cult started to be criticised, Alexander invented an oracle against his critics, saying that "Pontus was full of *atheists and Christians* who had the hardihood to utter the vilest abuse of him; these he bade them drive away (ἐλαύνειν) with stones if they wanted to have the god gracious" (25). And in answer to a query about what fate had befallen Epicurus in Hades, he created the response that "he sits with leaden fetters on his feet in the mire (ἐν βορβόρῳ)", which, given the Orphic colouring of 'mire', looks like a quotation from an Orphic *katabasis*.[91] It is clear therefore that the three categories belonged to the real *bêtes noires* of Alexander.[92] As a philosophically interested person, he will have been familiar with Epicurean writings and the contemporary Epicureans in Asia Minor.[93] Was he also acquaint-

87 For these mysteries, see my reconstruction in Bremmer (2014, 1–20). For the offices, ibid. 5 n. 32.

88 Riedweg (1987, 80). "So drive away, you who have been initiated into, and are hierophants of, the sacred mysteries, drive away, I say, the souls that are mixed and in a confused crowd, brought together indiscriminately from all sides, the unpurified and still polluted souls" (transl. C.D. Yonge, adapted).

89 See the bibliography in Kotansky (1994, 163 on l.13).

90 See the many references in Levieils (2007, 332–367).

91 Cf. Bremmer (2003, 12–13).

92 For a subtle reading of Lucian's picture of Epicureanism in *Alex.*, see Van Nuffelen (2011, 185–189).

93 For them, see Marek (2010, 604–605). For Epicurus and atheism, see Whitmarsh (2015, 173–185).

ed with Christianity? Glykon calls himself 'a light for the mortals' (18: φάος ἀνθρώποισιν), just as Jesus called himself 'light of the world' (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). But that similarity is hardly sufficient proof, just as Victor's idea Alexander's status as the grandson of a god can be compared to Jesus being the son of God, is unpersuasive. In the present state of our knowledge we can do no more than assume some familiarity without knowing to what extent Alexander had taken an interest in early Christianity.[94]

On the same day, there was, it seems, a performance of a play. Lucian says only: "subsequently, there was the child-bed of Leto, the birth of Apollo, his marriage to Coronis, and the birth of Asclepius" (38). This recalls the likelihood that short plays or pantomimes about the life of Dionysos were performed at the Dionysiac mysteries.[95] It seems a reasonable guess that at Abonuteichos the *mystai* could watch a play about the coming into being of Asclepius, starting with his grandmother Leto and father Apollo; indeed, bronze tablets had been discovered in Chalcedon, which predicted that Apollo would settle with Asclepius in Abonuteichos (10, see also 13 and 14).[96] The next day there was another play, this time about 'the epiphany of Glykon and the birth of the god' (38).[97] On this day, and/or perhaps on the first day, dancing probably took place, which was an indispensable part of ancient mysteries as Lucian himself notes (*Salt*. 15).

The *gran finale*, though, took place on the last day: "On the third day there was the union of Podaleirios and the mother of Alexander—it was called the Day of Torches, and torches were burned" (39),[98] which, conceivably, was a kind of *drama mystikon* of the night Alexander was conceived. Given the prominence of the torches I would be inclined to assign 'the carrying of the torches and the mystical leaps', which are mentioned in the next chapter, on this day too.[99] Torches were important at celebrations of mysteries, since they traditionally took place at night.[100] At the Eleusinian mysteries the end of the first day was signified by the throwing of torches,[101] and Alexander may have been inspired by that part of the ritual. The 'leaps' suggest enthusiastic dances, and

94 *Contra* Victor (1997, 50).

95 Bremmer (2014, 106–107).

96 For the *topos* of the discovery of such tablets, see the bibliography in Bremmer (2014, 88 n.31, 112 n.11).

97 Lucian, *Alex*. 38–39: ἐν δὲ τῇ δευτέρᾳ Γλύκωνος ἐπιφάνεια καὶ γέννησις τοῦ θεοῦ.

98 Lucian, *Alex*. 39: τρίτῃ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ Ποδαλειρίου ἦν καὶ τῆς μητρὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου γάμος· Δᾳδὶς δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο καὶ δᾶδες διεκαίοντο. The last sentence looks like a gloss.

99 Lucian *Alex*. 40: ἐπὶ ταῖς δᾳδουχίαις καὶ τοῖς μυστικοῖς σκιρτήμασιν.

100 Bremmer (2014, xii, 9 and 105).

101 Bremmer (2014, 11).

the fact that the only other use of the word σκίρτημα in Lucian refers to satyrs may suggest once again an inspiration from Dionysiac mysteries.

During the dances, Alexander's "thigh was bared purposely and showed golden. No doubt gilded leather had been put about it, which gleamed in the light of the torches".[102] The golden thigh of course evokes Pythagoras,[103] an allusion that was surely recognised by Lucian's readers. He even mentions that a question about it was submitted to Glykon, who obligingly confirmed the Pythagorean connection (40). The thigh is only one of several indications of Alexander's Neo-Pythagorean sympathies.[104] We can see also in this aspect that Alexander was here exploiting a popular theme in later antiquity. But it remains surprising that he displayed the golden thigh during his mysteries. It is an excellent illustration of the *bricoliste* character of this invented ritual.

We have no idea how the sexual union between Podaleirios and Alexander's mother (her name, in classical Greek fashion,[105] is left unmentioned) was portrayed, but perhaps again in a little pantomime. During the second and final stage of the Eleusinian mysteries there was mention or portrayal of the love between the Athenian king Celeus and Demeter.[106] Moreover, there was at least a suggestion, of carnal love between the hierophant and the priestess.[107] The theme of a sexual union was certainly present in the Eleusinian mysteries, even if we do not know how it was enacted or related, and these unions may well have inspired Alexander in designing his own mysteries. In the case of Podaleirios, Asclepius' son (*Il.* 2.732, 11.833), the union helped to legitimise Alexander's medical expertise. Lucian does not greatly elaborate upon this aspect of his activities, but it clearly was important since he mentions it a number of times.[108] It is not surprising, therefore, that Alexander was rather keen on his mythological father, as he had fabricated an oracle before coming to Abonutei-

102 Lucian, *Alex*. 40: γυμνωθεὶς ὁ μηρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐξεπίτηδες χρυσοῦς διεφάνη, δέρματος ὡς εἰκὸς ἐπιχρύσου περιτεθέντος καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐγὴν τῶν λαμπάδων ἀποστίλβοντος.

103 For all references, see Burkert (1972, 142 n. 119, 159 n. 215).

104 Lucian, *Alex*. 4, 6, 33, cf. Goulet (1989), with older bibliography; Victor (1997, 38 – 52) (very speculative).

105 Cf. Bremmer (1980).

106 Schol. Aelius Arist. p. 53.15 – 16. Chaniotis (2002, 78 – 80), in an otherwise useful discussion, by a slip refers to love between Zeus and Demeter here.

107 Asterius, *Homilies* 10.9.1 Datema, transl. Parker (2005, 356), with an illuminating commentary.

108 Lucian, *Alex*. 22, 36, 53, 60, cf. Crosby (1923); Jones (1986, 135) (Alexander studied under a doctor from Tyana in Cappadocia, who was in turn a disciple of the famous Apollonius of Tyana); Robert (1980, 419, n. 60). In this apprenticeship lies, in Jones' view, the explanation behind Alexander's Pythagorean beliefs.

chos that referred to: "the divine Alexander, who shares the blood of Podaleirios" (11). In addition to the marriage of Podaleirios and Alexander's mother,

> [...] there was the amour of Selene and Alexander, and the birth of Rutilianus' wife. The torch-bearer and hierophant was our Endymion, Alexander. While he lay in full view, pretending to be asleep, there came down to him from the roof, as if from heaven, not Selene but Rutilia, a very pretty woman, married to one of the Emperor's stewards. She was genuinely in love with Alexander and he with her; and before the eyes of her worthless husband there were kisses and embraces in public. If there had not been so many torches, there would have been even more intimate gropings.[109]

The story of the passion of Selene for Endymion, mentioned already by Sappho (199 Voigt; Epimenides F 12 Fowler), is probably of Anatolian origin.[110] There seems to be no convincing reason why Alexander should have opted for this myth, except for its popularity in Roman times, its entertainment-value and, perhaps, the chance to steal some kisses in a more or less proper manner. In any case, these little plays had no Eleusinian model and belonged to Alexander's own inventive design.

Finally, "after a short time Alexander entered again, robed as a hierophant, amid profound silence, and said in a loud voice, over and over again, 'Hail, Glycon!', while following in his train came Eumolpids and a number of Kerykes from Paphlagonia, with brogans on their feet and breath reeking of garlic, who shouted in response, 'Hail, Alexander!' ".[111] It is clear that we now are back with Eleusinian ritual, at whose high point the hierophant also appeared displaying an ear of wheat.[112] Even the loud voice was taken over from Eleusis,[113] and the authority of Eleusis was further invoked by the appearance of the Eleusinian priestly *genê* of the Eumolpids and Kerykes. On the other hand, the words spoken in Eleusis

109 Lucian, *Alex*. 39: καὶ τελευταῖον Σελήνης καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔρως καὶ τικτομένη τοῦ Ῥουτιλιανοῦ ἡ γυνή. ἐδᾳδούχει δὲ καὶ ἱεροφάντει ὁ Ἐνδυμίων Ἀλέξανδρος. καὶ ὁ μὲν καθεύδων δῆθεν κατέκειτο ἐν τῷ μέσῳ, κατῄει δὲ ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ὀροφῆς ὡς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἀντὶ τῆς Σελήνης Ῥουτιλία τις ὡραιοτάτη, τῶν Καίσαρος οἰκονόμων τινὸς γυνή, ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρῶσα τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ ἀντερωμένη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς τοῦ ὀλέθρου ἐκείνης ἀνδρὸς φιλήματά τε ἐγίγνετο ἐν τῷ μέσῳ καὶ περιπλοκαί. εἰ δὲ μὴ πολλαὶ ἦσαν αἱ δᾷδες, τάχα ἄν τι καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ κόλπου ἐπράττετο.

110 Bremmer (2009, 305–306); Fowler (2000–2013, 2.133–134).

111 Lucian, *Alex*. 39: μετὰ μικρὸν δὲ εἰσῄει πάλιν ἱεροφαντικῶς ἐσκευασμένος ἐν πολλῇ τῇ σιωπῇ, καὶ αὐτὸς μὲν ἔλεγε μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ, 'Ἰὴ Γλύκων'· ἐπεφθέγγοντο δὲ αὐτῷ ἐπακολουθοῦντες Εὐμολπίδαι δῆθεν καὶ Κήρυκές τινες Παφλαγόνες, καρβατίνας ὑποδεδεμένοι, πολλὴν τὴν σκοροδάλμην ἐρυγγάνοντες, 'Ἰὴ Ἀλέξανδρε'.

112 Bremmer (2014, 14).

113 Well noted by Chaniotis (2002, 79); cf. Bremmer (2014, 15).

had now been adapted to the new circumstances. Richard Gordon has well observed that the antiphonal shouts regarding the expulsion of Christians and Epicureans helped to forge a bond between Alexander and his followers (Gordon 2013, 159). We can now see that he intended to achieve the same at the end of the mysteries, where the last word heard would be 'Alexander!'

When we now compare the mysteries of Eleusis with the description given by Lucian, we cannot but note the absence of some salient features of the older celebration. Although he does mention fees in his account of the oracle, Lucian does not mention anything about fees in connection with the mysteries. Yet, wherever we have sufficient information, it is clear that mysteries never were free.[114] There is no mention of the light that was the climax of the Eleusinian mysteries and imitated in several other such rites.[115] Again, Lucian is happy to tell us everything he thinks we should know about the rites: the tradition of maintaining secrecy no longer holds. There are a number of other differences too. Alexander seems to have fused the offices of *dadouchos* and hierophant. We hear nothing about a promise of a good afterlife; the only 'message' of the mystery-cult seems to have been the promotion of Alexander himself. Finally, we also do not know what kind of clientele visited the mysteries. Nicole Belayche (2013) has recently drawn attention to the fact that initiation into mysteries seems increasingly to have become an elite activity in Roman times. Lucian gives us no information on this topic, but the mention of the wife of an imperial slave in the local financial administration (οἰκονόμος = *dispensator*) and Alexander's obvious social ambitions suggest that it will not have been so very different in Abonuteichos.

3. Conclusion

So what have we learned about religious entrepreneurs in the second century? The case of Peregrinus is interesting. He clearly came from a wealthy family, but joined a 'communist' Christian community without immediately divesting himself of his wealth or sharing it with his fellow Christians. He must have risen quickly to a high rank in this community because of his superior *paideia* and, presumably, his social and rhetorical skills. His 'conversion' thus enabled him to take on a new role and find an outlet for his intellectual energy and social ambition. The case shows that we need not always think of people outside the

114 For fees in mysteries, see Bremmer (2014, xii, 138 – 139).
115 Bremmer (2014, 14 – 15; 33; 123).

socio-political élite when looking at ancient religious entrepeneurs. Religious positions could sometimes have furnished more power than was possible in a political situation dominated by the Romans or power-sharing amongst members of the elite.

It is different with Alexander. Although Lucian suggests low origins, his good education clearly belies such an insinuation. In addition, he was enterprising and without many moral scruples (again, according to Lucian). He certainly had a good nose for what the public wanted, just like many modern religious entrepreneurs. Thus he founded an oracle and a mystery-cult. But in both cases he used current cults, in Richard Gordon's words, as sources of authority not as templates (Gordon 2013, 159 – 160). In the case of the oracle we can see a combination of oracle practices from Didyma and Klaros with the traditional snake cult of Asclepius. In the case of the mysteries he freely used the Eleusinian ones but with additional input from the Dionysiac mysteries in order to make his own mysteries more attractive and more in line with the demands of an elite influenced by Roman entertainment expectations. The overall effect must have been a strengthening of his religious position, but we can also see that Alexander used this religious capital to increase his social and, surely, economic capital. At the same time, his cults will have filled a void in the Pontic area where no important oracle or healing cult had hitherto existed. Alexander had spotted a real opportunity in the local religious market place and, as a good entrepreneur, he seized his chance. Lucian clearly did not like these men and did all he could to denigrate them. We may sympathise with him, but should always be aware that the motivations of religious innovators are often inscrutable. Sex, money and power do not exclude religious motivations and are often inextricably interwoven with them. In that respect, the ancient world was not very different from what we can still observe today.

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