

Response to DR BURKHARD SCHERER

BY DR Christian Lindtner,

18 September 2003

On September 18, 2003, Dr. B. Scherer contributed to the debate by revealing to the public "The Secrets about Christian Lindtner - a preliminary response to the CLT". Here are the main points advanced by BS, with the replies of CL:

1. BS: The Lotussûtra (SDP) does not represent mainstream Mahâyâna.

CL: Let me begin with a few quotations or references taken from H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism. A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, Tokyo 1980 (and later reprints), pp. 183-191: "The most important Mahâyâna-sûtra, which was most influential throughout Buddhist countries, is the Saddharma-pundarîka-sûtra, "Lotus of the Superb Religion". There are old translations, complete or partial, into languages such as Tibetan, Chinese, Khotanese, Uygur etc. In India, where about 50 commentaries on the SDP are said (by a certain Paramârtha) to have been composed, the SDP is already referred to as an authoritative scripture by Nâgârjuna (Sûtrasamuccaya etc.) and his students (2. Century A.D). In Tibet, the celebrated historian Bu-ston (1290-1364) cites the authority of the SDP in his "History of Buddhism". In the Far East (see the Internet!), millions of Buddhists have believed, and still do, that, as Nakamura wrote, the SDP is the "most important Mahâyâna-sûtra".

Conclusion: BS must be jesting when he claims that the SDP does not represent mainstream Mahâyâna. But perhaps BS wants to say that he himself does not accept the authority of the SDP, just as Buddhists in Theravâda countries do not accept its canonical status?

Personally, I would even be tempted to agree, but our own opinions are entirely irrelevant here. From a historical point of view, the SDP most certainly represents mainstream Mahâyâna. But, in fact, the question whether SDP is mainstream or not does not affect the CLT significantly.

2. The dating. There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that the SDP belongs to the first century A.D. See Nakamura, ppp. 186-187 for the most relevant arguments.

BS suggests that some parts of the SDP - the narratives - may belong to an even earlier date.

CL: That may be so, but it in no way affects the CLT. Still, I would be careful in claiming that certain parts predate the SDP as a whole. We have no trace of the narratives outside and independently of the SDP as we now have it.

3. BS: It is hard to believe that anyone would combine materials from the MSV with the SDP - these two sources being so different in many ways. The MSV belongs "to a pre-Mahâyâna sub-school of Buddhist Realism", according to BS. The SDP, on the other hand, belongs to an entirely different school.

CL: True, the CLT claims that $Q = MSV + SDP$, i.e. that the New Testament Gospels were fabricated by combining logia (words, sentences, motives etc.) from, most of all, those two sources, namely MSV + SDP. These materials were then combined with direct or indirect

quotations from the OT. Thus the Pundarîka of the Saddharma appeared in the disguise of a new form of old Jewish, even Hellenistic, tradition. That MSV and SDP were thus combined should not really come as a surprise to us. The MSV is a huge collection of materials, legends, doctrine, rules, etc., that can to a large extent be traced back to earlier forms of Indian Buddhism.

The famous Mahâprajñâpâramitâ-Upadesa, for instances, uses both sources, the SDP as well as the MSV, side by side. Indian Mahâyâna authors often use materials drawn from the MSV., already from the earliest times (Nâgârjuna etc.). Tibetans, who follow various sorts of Mahâyâna, still use the MSV for the legends etc. All this is well-known.

Conclusion: BS must be jesting when he finds it unlikely that the authors of the NT combined the SDP with the MSV, for this is what Buddhists always have done.

4. BS: CL cites Paul Romans 3: 7 as proof of a direct textual relationship.

CL: CL does not cite Paul Romans 3:7 as a proof of direct textual relationship. CL cites Paul Romans 3:7 as an excellent example of the spirit of the SDP when it comes to SDP as well as NT propaganda. The concept of upâya-kausalya is, as we all know, fundamental to the SDP. It implies that you, as a missionary, can use all sorts of tricks, including puns, miracles, transformations (a man disguised as a woman etc.), white lies etc. etc. in order to fool ignorant people into having faith in the SDP and its message, namely that all living beings eventually will become buddhas, and that the Buddha never really died etc. What Paul is saying here in Romans is , in plain language, that is quite OK to lie as long as you do so for the greater glory of God. And Paul means what he says. The best example of a typical SDP pious fraud is to be found in 1 Cor 15, as I have pointed out long ago in my essay “Who was Kleophas?”. The “more than 500 brethren”, “most of whom are still alive”, who are among those cited as eyewitnesses to Christ as raised from the dead, were originally the 500 Buddhist monks present at the death of the Buddha, as related in the MPS (part of the MSV). So, here Paul reveals himself, if we know the original source, as being guilty of a pious fraud, indeed. It would be like citing BS as an eyewitness to events that took place during the French Revolution.

5. BS: CL is unwilling to ponder the Jewish and Hellenistic background of the Gospels! CL: The CLT is not at all unwilling to do so. In his book, and in various reviews, CL has emphasized that the Buddhist missionaries took place during the French Revolution! The CLT does not neglect the Jewish and the Hellenistic background. On the contrary! The unknown authors of the NT smuggled in their message in the disguise of the Greek language (“Greekskrit”, the “Hebrew dialect” of the Greek language, see Papias) along with traditional Jewish and Hellenistic ideas. In particular, I have referred to the much neglected work of my old friend Dr. Derrett. His six volumes of “Studies in the New Testament”, are a mine of information about puns and allusions to Jewish and Hellenistic sources. To make myself quite clear: One must understand the wonderful art of combination of the authors of the NT, including the Gospels. In the introduction to my book, I make it very clear that the Buddhist missionaries not only imitated their own sources. They also assimilated their own sources to the Jewish and Hellenistic environment. It was absolutely essential that the secret of ho khristos = ksatriyas was kept a secret. If you work by way of deception and disguise, you obviously also do what you can not to be disclosed or exposed. The missionaries of the

SDP saw themselves engaged in a holy war (dharma-vijaya!), as is clear from many passages in the SDP. This idea about the Buddha appearing in disguise, surely a sort of pious fraud, is not only fundamental to Mahâyâna proselytism. As I have pointed out in my book, we already find it in the MSV, for instance in MPS 23:4-5. Here the Buddha says that he has turned up in many assemblies disguised as ksatriyas etc., assimilating his size and voice to that of his audience. He speaks the languages of his audience. Suddenly he disappears. People do not know whether he was a man or a god.

So, in brief, Jesus appears in many a disguise. In the NT the Indian bodhisattva, entirely fictitious, appears in Jewish and Hellenistic disguise, just as he appears in Chinese disguise etc. among the Chinese. All this, of course, is upâya-kausalya.

6. BS: The “translation” technique used by the Buddhists to create the Gospels as presented by CL is such an astonishing nonsense, that no scholar could possibly take it serious.

CL: The translation, or imitation-cum-assimilation technique that I point out as having been used by the Buddhist missionaries, is a simple historical fact that can be verified by all scholars who take the trouble to compare the Sanskrit and the Greek word for word. Quite a few “scholars” would share the personal feelings of BS, to judge from the many similar reactions that I have received. Those who are just a little bit familiar with traditional rabbinic logic, style and language will not at all be puzzled by “such an astonishing nonsense”. They loved it.

This is also where “CL’s new obsession” comes in, according to BS: Gematria. Quite a few good friends have, with the best of intentions, advised me: Stop counting, for God’s sake! Unfortunately, I am not the first or only scholar to point out Gematria in the Gospels (see my paper with that title in *Acta Orientalia*). Wish I were, for the discovery of Gematria in the NT is an extremely important discovery! The credit belongs, among others, to Dutch scholars such as Smit Sibinga, Menken et al. It is a simple fact that the authors of the Gospels counted the words and the syllables of their texts. It cannot be denied.

Here I would also like to call attention to the remarkable work done by Dan Gleason www.jesus8880.com.

So, the puns, Gematria etc. are simple facts of history. The “half-insane amateurism”, has nothing to do with the CLT, but with the sources that are the object of the study of the CLT. Some NT scholars - just for the record - tend to confuse the CLT with the Gospels themselves. They become angry with CL for calling attention to Gematria, puns etc. in the Gospels. They even claim that CL has introduced the puns and the numerical patterns into the Holy Book. In other words, they tend to identify CL with Matthew etc.

True, we do not know who wrote the Gospels. But we do know - believe me - that CL did not write the NT!

In my book I have, to be sure, pointed out that there are many other ancient texts available, proving that the “half-insane amateurism” was quite common, and quite popular in those days.

7. BS: One could take e.g. Goethe’s *Werther*, and find a similar development structure! CL: Really? Did Goethe know SDP and MSV - long before these texts were known in Europe? Alternatively, Goethe did not know these texts - nevertheless, his *Werther* displays “a similar development structure”! Really? Dr Countess has come up with similar claims with

regard to the Sovjet Constitution, I think, which, I imagine, shows but little similarity to Werther. Or am I mistaken? But let us give our learned friends the benefit of doubt. Let us wait and see whether such claims belong to the category of “half-insane amateurism” - or to “sound scholarship”. Or let us assume that our friends are jesting once again, and relieve them of the burden of having to come up with solid proof in support of their - perhaps rather rash - claims. In any case, I readily confess, I am glad that the CLT does not claim MSV+SDP to be the Q(uelle) of Werther, the Sovject Constitution etc.

8. Finally, in general, BS would like to speak of “subtexts”, where I speak of texts. At this final point I can only repeat myself once again. Please read the original texts for yourself, compare them word for word, count syllables, count words, and in the end you shall find that the Greek text of the Gospels and of the NT - even the title - must be defined as a Pirate-copy of Q that was assimilated to the OT and the Jewish and Hellenistic environment and traditions in general.

Let me add this: Many historical facts are denied by those who are not pleased with them. But a scholar should not deny facts, even if he personally is not pleased with those facts. For instance, to give a nice example, when I published two volumes of translations of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit, Tibetan, Pâli and Chinese into Danish in 1998, 23 so-called scholars, none of whom were able to read the original, of course, did not like some of the facts presented by the sources that I had translated.. What I wrote was new, and it was true. But they did not like it. So they demanded that my books be withdrawn from circulation, i.e. burned. It is to be expected that the CLT revision of the NT, as suggested e.g. by Dr. Robert Countess and many others, will be met in the same way, probably with even greater furor. The reaction is, of course, ridiculous and even miserable. But it is quite typical of so-called scholars these days. Most so-called scholars, that I know of, cannot think freely for themselves. But, like parrots, they can repeat what they hear. They are what we in Sanskrit would label sruta-mâtra-avalambinas, they merely hang on to what they hear. The authors of the SDP recognized this sad truth. Therefore, a debate, even if there are many misunderstandings, may be a good thing. When students have heard the name of the CLT a sufficient number of times, they may start asking themselves some good questions...

Chr. Lindtner, September 24 2003.