

The Christian Lindtner Theory [CLT]
of the Buddhist Origins of the New Testament Gospels
and Its Basic Problems from My Standpoint in
NT Greek Text Studies

By Robert H. Countess, PhD

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Danish scholar and renowned specialist in Sanskrit, Pali and Buddhist documentary studies, Dr. Christian Lindtner, has promoted his theory for some years in print and in lecture format, that the NT Gospels and Jesus Christ are completely non-historical and rather are the result of Buddhist missionary activity in Palestine in the First Century AD.

The theory holds that these Buddhist missionaries [= BM] composed oral and/or written stories reflecting the Buddhas life and teachings by using puns on proper nouns, verbs, adjectives and geographical terms, so that the religious ideas of the Buddha might be propagated by means of using an Israelitish context, but in the Greek language - the lingua franca - of the era.

A bold and radical thesis indeed, Dr. Lindtner is quite serious about its historical verifiability and he has arranged a conference for September 11-13, 2003 to be held at the Folkets Hus in Klavrestrom, Sweden, where some German scholars and I will respond in order to support or criticize the theory.

On the campus of the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana on September 20, 2002, at a "Christianity and Native Cultures" conference [St. Mary's College], Dr. Lindtner presented his theory and I offered a critical response in which I claimed among other points, that if the purpose of the BM was to promote Buddhism under the guise of a fraudulently created corpus of NT documents, then the BM utterly failed in their purpose, since the result was a new and highly successful religion [Christianity] that at no significant point agrees with Buddhism.

In the present lecture, I shall take my earlier critical reflections to a more detailed level of analysis. I must admit at the beginning, that I have no competence in Sanskrit or Pali, but I do hold the doctorate in NT Greek Text and have spent the past 40+ years in almost daily reading and study of the NT documents.

THE PUN METHOD FOR PROPAGATING BUDDHISM

Dr. Lindtner offers evidence for this method, but for my purposes, I must ask if there is evidence, that the method was demonstrably employed for creating the NT Gospels, as he insists. His evidence is that his list of puns is the evidence - certainly a fair enough proposal in itself - but the final result must be: Is his theory convincing?

I ask certain questions that I consider to be crucial to demonstrating the CLT and these questions are based in part on the concrete statistics for the NT corpus of 27 canonical writings.

Using Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece 24th Edition [1960] I calculated that in 657 printed pages with approximately 7 words per line and approximately 30 lines per page, that there are about 138,000 words and particles in the average printed Greek New Testament. Dr. Lindtner has stated of the whole Gospel Story that "It's all exactly there in the Buddhist documents." And I take this as a fair statement of his thesis. Therefore I shall take as a starting point, that a statistical analysis is also a reasonable approach for verification or falsification of the CLT. [All the while, I keep in mind that Dr. Lindtner is an atheist and does not believe in Buddhism either.]

How many Proper Personal Nouns are alleged to have been created by the BM from Sanskrit? An approximate yet concrete number ought to be available from the CLT for comparative analysis. How many Proper Personal Nouns are actually found in the Four Gospels themselves? Again, a definite number is readily at hand by means of computer generated word count.

What percentage of the latter is alleged by the CLT to be based on BM puns? Is the percentage small, large, very small or very large? Same questions for Geographical Place Names and verbs and adjectives. This sort of correlation must also be asked for Buddhist concepts such as Monism, Maya, Buddhahood, Samsara, Karma, the negation of the individual and other key "doctrines" of Buddhism. [I place "doctrines" in quotation marks since my understanding of Buddhism is, that at bottom there can be no REAL doctrine or dogma because of the overriding principle of ILLUSION (Maya) itself - which destroys traditional logical postulates and analytical treatment.]

Is Dr. Lindtner's concordance method for discovering BM puns itself valid? His method, I have observed, is to use a Watchtower Greek interlinear with English for finding puns, with various transpositions of letters alleged to be based on generally accepted linguistic principles. On this crucial aspect of his method, linguistic experts must be consulted for their critical analysis. Since his method is not primarily focused on contexts and historical and cultural settings within the NT corpus, one may ask if the concordance method might find in for example the US Constitution or any lengthy document similar "puns", that might then be used to demonstrate that BM had been at work, as it were, on this document.

Is the CLT reliable for comparing any two languages beyond Greek and Sanskrit in order to find BM puns? For example, might one use a computer generated analysis to find such puns in the Soviet Constitution or a Swahili novel or a Chinese history book? In what significant ways - if any - does the CLT concordance method differ from the recent Bible Code fraud wherein a Jewish Talmudic fanatic discovered all sorts of modern events prophesied - as he dogmatized - in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament? Or by which Christian Identity [whom I refer to as "Caucasian Identity"] types have found the White Race to be ISRAEL and thus the objects of God's primary revelatory and salvific activity? Likewise might one argue that the Russian Christian Ivan Panin a century ago was correct in his "Bible Numerics" theory that God designed both the OT and the NT with a perfect correlation of numbers and multiples of numerical combinations, so that Christians can verify the texts - with Panin accomplishing his work without the aid of computers, I might add!

But a careful study of Panin's work demonstrates, that he sometimes freely contrived his numbers with a +1 here or a -1 there in order to force the data to fit his theory. Indeed, one might argue - as Dr. Lindtner does - that BM "PUN-ers" [my term] did make attempts to piggyback onto existing traditions and documents found in India, China, Persia and the Fertile Crescent in order to propagate their Buddhist "Gospel" [I place this noun in quotation marks since I hold, that Maya precludes any meaningful "good news" of any sort.] And I suggest a bit humorously, that one might even consider these "PUN-ers" to have been associated with "the Punjab" region, with the Persian Panjab from the Sanskrit panca apah [= "the five rivers"] and thus discover "Pun-ers" in Jesus' reference to "the five loaves" of bread and the two fish for a certain miracle in Mark 6:38 [but seven in Matthew 15:34 and Mark 8:5].

Matthew is at the center of the CLT as an Ur-Buddhist Document, but I ask where the BM "PUN-er" found "JESUS" [or, "JEHOSHUAH" or similar spelling] in his "Ur-" source. One must begin with Matthew 1:1 and account for "Biblos geneseos Iesou Christou huiou David huiou Abraam" and then demonstrate the "Ur-" sourcing for the remaining dozens of Personal Names leading to verse 16. Likewise for Luke 3:23-37. Likewise for Luke's radically historical framework in 1:1-4 and then 2:1-6. Does the CLT find the patriarchal Abraham in an alpha privative [= no] plus Brahman and thus Abraham as "anti-/no Brahman", as I have read in a Theosophist writer?

At the close of Matthew [28:19-20], the CLT BM "PUN-er" has his Jesus commanding his disciples to go worldwide and evangelize homo sapiens types with a personal belief and commitment to Jesus the Christ, not to a denial of their individuation, so that they might be reabsorbed into a monistic abstraction that is at bottom Maya-illusion. One might add to this mix that Jesus Christ promises here to be [= existence rather than Buddhist NON-existence] with them "heos tes sunteleias tou aionos" [unto the concluding of the world-age] - all this quite contrary to a Buddhist cycle of reincarnations on an eternal wheel wherein the soul is deterministically condemned to the impossibility of meaningful resolution of his/her endless cycle of reincarnations. One must confront here the opposite teaching of the Buddha and thus one must ask: If the BM "PUN-ers" were really seeking to promote Buddhism through this marvelous literary scam, then they quite "marvelously" failed egregiously in my opinion. On the contrary, a new religion developed from their creative scam and this new religion regularly fails to bring anyone to embrace Buddhism. Further I may add, that a homo sapiens is much more likely to become a Buddhist by walking a beach and staring at the billions of grains of sand rather than by reading the alleged BM Matthew, Mark, Luke or John or Acts.

Additional questions for CLT analysis might be based on a text critical and historical critical approach.

How much time in months and years did the BM labor to produce this fraud? Where did they live and support themselves financially all this time? With what local non-BM neighbors did they associate with and how did they keep this gigantic fraud a secret? Or did they openly discuss with locals what they were doing? How did they manage to spread their Matthew, Mark, Luke, John et alia so that significant numbers in the thousands came to embrace the fraudulent Jesus Christ and the fraudulent historical non-events and non-persons they created?

What role did the BM themselves play in preaching and teaching this gigantic fraud? Did they suffer persecution and even death at the hands of Pharisees and Sadducees and Roman authorities for their fraudulent Gospels? Did the BM have before them copies of Hebrew and Greek Old Testament writings? If so, where did they obtain these? From a synagogue president? Did they fraudulently represent themselves as pious Israelites in order to gain access to these documents? How did they gain linguistic skills necessary for this marvelous fraud? Did they make written notes on papyrus or vellum or parchment with quill pens and the black ink of the day?

How did they earn money to buy these expensive materials? How did they go about the mechanics of a general outline of their "Jesus story hoax" and then count and correlate words and letters and then organize and write the final product? How long in running feet [there was no Codex form of writings in that early period] was the final product? Was it 10 Meters long? Was it 100 Meters long? Did they immediately make extra copies in the event the Israelite religious authorities at the Temple might confiscate the documents? Were they faced with arguments from Pharisees as was their fraudulent Jesus in the BM story itself? Were any BM "PUN-ers" ever tried judicially and crucified by Romans at the urging of Temple priests and lawyers?

These critical questions could continue to a much greater length, but at least these must be confronted by the CLT.

Dr. Lindtner informed me in an email on August 19th that [re: textual criticism] "Unfortunately there is no such thing! I am one of the few persons, who (with my background in Latin and Greek) have discussed such things here and there when publishing critical editions of Sanskrit texts. In fact I am considered on of the main authorities in this field."

For the NT text we have some 13,000 documents to work with - about 8,000 Greek, 4,000 Latin, and 1,000 in other languages. And we have the NT text rather well established for the mid-Fourth Century AD with a major effort now to take the text back into the Third Century AD. Question: Can we have any certainty that any Buddhist written texts in Sanskrit existed before the Second Century AD?

Perhaps one must consider that some Hindu religionists even created "Buddhism" out of whole cloth and that there was never a historical Gauttama, but that some "PUN-ers" created it as well. One matter, however, is clear: As in the saying "No holes? No Holocaust!" one can affirm "No Resurrection? No Christianity!" If the CLT be firmly established, then Paul was quite correct when he stated in First Corinthians 15:16-17, that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, "your faith is vain" [= mataia].

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Dr. Lindtner's thesis is the result of several contributing factors, one being his expertise in his field of Sanskrit, Pali and Buddhist studies; another is that he is accustomed to years of diligent, disciplined research; another is, that he is fearless in promoting a theory, that will - if it ever becomes widely publicized via the media - be met with enormous hostility and rejection by the masses of Christians, many Jews and many Biblical scholars, who have expertise in the Biblical languages. [In April, 2002 at a JESUS SEMINAR in Dallas, Texas where two scholars, who believe very little in the NT is of historical credibility, I raised the basic CLT thesis and was met with immediate rejection by these two rejectionists.

As a Christian myself, I must promote full freedom of research and discussion and publication of every serious theory re: religion, philosophy, history, politics, society and culture and of course the physical sciences.

I have debated a Darwinian Evolutionist [January, 2002] in a public forum because I hold this theory to be seriously lacking in rigorous scientific requirements for acceptance. I have debated the Jewish Holocaust Story because I hold, that whatever happened to thousands of "Jews" [a problematic term for careful definition] between 1939-1945 was fundamentally similar to what happened to all sorts of people caught up in the horrors of war and I hold quite firmly, that the Jewish Holocaust Story has become a religious dogma, wherein Jewish sufferings - both real and alleged - are legislated into uniqueness [Einzigartigkeit] so that dissidents and so-called "deniers" are fined, fired and imprisoned in many otherwise modern liberal countries. I can no more support the Jewish Holocaust Story as a religious dogma justifying billions of materialistic dollars in a Holocaust Industry of reparations, than I could support a dogma for Negroes alive today in my own country to receive billions of dollars for what really happened or is alleged to have happened from the late 15th century to the early 19th century during the Slave Trade.

Thus, I participate in a critical analysis of the Christian Lindtner Theory and support his freedom to pursue it as long as he believes he has solid evidence for it, even though I remain unconvinced of the truthfulness of the theory. Scholars must debate each others theories and they must do so in an ambience of cordiality as I seek to promote.

Robert H. Countess, PhD

New Testament Greek Text

boblpinc@earthlink.net

28755 Sagewood Circle

Toney, Alabama 35773 USA

Phone: (256) 232-4940.