

Proposal For Clarification Spurned

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Introduction

The Christian Missionary Centre Batala is one of the oldest Centres for the propagation of Christianity established in the areas of Sikh population under the wings of British administration soon after the annexation of Punjab. Dr. W.H. McLeod had been a functionary of the Christian Mission in Punjab for about a decade before

^a of Sikh Community
made, inter-alia, two entirely baseless statements

1. Guru Nanak made Indian religious thought and in this sense he could not be considered founder of Sikhism as a new religion, his system b« combination of Nathism and Vaishnavism.
2. The original Sikh Scripture, the Kartarpuri Bir, stands tampered with and suffers from motivated deletions.

. These and other such statements of McLeod became the subject of discussion in over half a dozen other books mentioned at the back of this brochure. These books have dealt with, apart from the basic principles of Sikh ideology and the landmarks of Sikh history, almost every aspect of the different misstatements of McLeod.

In December 1988, after a public notice issued in February 1988, the society called the Sikh Community of North America held a seminar of Sikh Studies at Long Beach University of California. As many of the topics for discussion related to the wrong formulations of McLeod, he was specifically contacted and invited to attend the seminar and express his views on his assertions. Despite repeated invitations he and his friends, J. S. Grewal, H. S. Oberoi and Pashora Singh, although they had been attending Conferences at other places, had one reason or the other for not joining at Long Beach. Early in 1989, the papers contributed at this conference were published under the title 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism'.

Partly because of his career in the Christian Mission in the Punjab and partly because of his unfounded statements, McLeod is a known person in the academic circles of Punjab. In 1989 two events happened

- (i) The Sikh Community of Toronto area had made collections and got created a Chair of Sikh Studies at the Toronto University with the evident object of projecting an authentic image of Sikhism and its history. But Dr. McLeod was appointed on that Chair by the University.
- (ii) In 1989 McLeod brought out two publications, 'The Sikhs' and 'Who Is a Sikh' in which he repeated his two formulations regarding the lack of independent ideological identity of the Sikh religion and the doubtful authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir.

The reality is that Guru Nanak's system is so revolutionary in its fundamentals that he has virtually supplanted most of the essentials of the earlier Indian religions. In fact, no prophet in the history of religion had made such radical changes. It was thus an evident distortion to say that he had given no new teaching. His statements about the Kartarpuri Bir were equally unfounded and were considered libellous and blasphemous because, while he had himself never examined it, scholars who had done so, had clearly recoided that there was no deletion of the Ramkali hymn. McLeod had known of those publications and that his statements were incorrect and considered insinuating, baseless, misleading and fallacious. The evident incorrectness of McLeod's statement which he knew to be so gave the impression that his views were motivated.

It was an evident contradiction that a person with such anti-Sikh views as McLeod, who does not consider Sikhism to have an ideology of its own, and alleges inept deletions in the Sikh Scripture, (the Guru of the Sikhs), should be manning a Chair meant for projecting an authentic image of Sikhism. The issue was considered by the Council of Sikh Affairs, Chandigarh, Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala, Khalsa Diwan, Ladhiana, and the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh. They felt that after getting expert notes the anomaly and irony of the situation on the two fundamental points should be pointed out to the University, who might have acted in ignorance of Dr. McLeod's background and conduct. It was hoped that once the reality was explained to the University, they would naturally try to rectify the position. Accordingly, we obtained the required expert notes on the two

issues and requested the University to have a response from McLeod and arrange an academic dialogue in order to clarify the issues. We made it clear that in case McLeod's assertion that Sikhism had no independent ideological identity, and that the Sikh Scripture suffered from motivated deletions, were incorrect, he would be the last person suitable to man a Chair established with the objective of presenting an authentic image of Sikhism and its history. And if McLeod's views about the alleged lack of identity of Sikh religion were correct, the very justification of a Chair of Sikh Studies would be knocked out.

About four months after our letter of October 12, 1989, followed by a reminder we got a reply (Feb, 1990) saying that they were lucky in having the services of McLeod who was a specialist on 19th century Sikhism, but the University did not accept our proposal for a dialogue on the two issues. Separately we learnt that while the University had turned down our request, they were approaching scholars in India and elsewhere so as to have a seminar in Toronto, presumably with the object of endorsing the unfounded views of McLeod. It seems that no scholar of religion was willing to support McLeod on the two issues mentioned by us. This attitude of the University appeared quite unfortunate. Further correspondence was exchanged between us and the University in which we consistently repeated our proposal and it is the discussion of the two fundamental issues alone that could clinch and decide the matter, and that any other proposal would be irrelevant and evasive. However, the University was repeatedly disinclined to discuss the two important issues and suggested topics that were irrelevant and hardly had any bearing on the two basic matters.

Our organisations felt that the choice of the two issues and the approach made were the only means to clarify the matter. The primary issue was whether McLeod had any sound knowledge of the Sikh religion and whether he observed normal academic ethics in making his statements. The note about the originality of Guru Nanak's thesis indicated that on fifteen basic essentials of his religion he had radically departed from the principles of earlier religions. And as such McLeod's repeated observations about Guru

Nanak having given no new religious thought, show his complete lack of knowledge of the Sikh religion and the Guru Granth. It is strange that while he has repeated this statement in his book of 1989, he has not quoted a single hymn from the Guru Granth to support his assertion. The second topic we proposed, had a basic bearing on the observance of academic ethics. He has stated that the Kartarpuri Bir stands tampered with and suffers from inept deletion of the Ramkali hymn. He has been doing that about the sacred scripture of the Sikhs without ever having examined the Bir and knowing quite well that scholars who had seen it had categorically stated that there was no such deletion. Hence the issue whether McLeod's statements were libellous and whether he observed normal academic ethics and restraints, could not be sidetracked, since it was intimately linked with the issue of his suitability for manning a chair of Sikh Studies, created with contributions from the Sikh community. Hence to us the replies of the University appeared quite unhelpful and unfortunate.

Since the members of the organisations have been feeling concerned, and want to know the details of the response from the University, we have thought it necessary to print our correspondence with the University. They were requested to indicate if they had any objection.

It is however, understood that some Sikhs from Toronto and neighbouring areas had a meeting and suggested four ideological subjects. According to a letter addressed By Dr. J. S. Mann to Dr. Milton Israel, the Toronto University, it appears, again evaded the real issue by breaking up the proposed topics and introducing them as subheads under some peripheral topics. In any case so far as we are concerned, our proposal which we felt to be both important and fundamental has been to discuss the two topics so that the matter about McLeod's understanding about the Sikh ideology and the observance of normal academic ethics is clarified first. In the absence of that further discussion becomes both irrelevant and meaningless. Separately we have also got printed the reviews of the books of McLeod, including his books of 1989, which have appeared in important University and other journals.

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959, Sector 59,
Chandigarh (INDIA)
Dated : 12th Oct., 1990.

The University of Toronto
Through : Dr. Milton Israel,
Director
Centre for South Asian Studies,
University of Toronto,
Toronto, CANADA.

Dear Sirs,

In response to some public suggestions our Associations have considered the issue of continuous misrepresentation of Sikh Religion by Dr W.H. McLeod. On our request, experts on the subject of Sikh Studies have written a brief note on distortions made by Dr McLeod. In their note while indicating the various incorrect formulations of McLeod, they have for want of time, dealt with only two issues, one regarding the independent identity of the Sikh ideology, and, second, on the authenticity of the Sikh Scripture (Guru Granth Sahib).

On the first issue, we find, McLeod has made a complete distortion about the fundamentals of Sikhism. No religious founder in the world has changed the earlier religious thought of his times so radically as did Guru Nanak. Earlier religions practically all aimed at reaching Heaven , or attaining salvation, liberation or Moksha, or seeking merger in Brahman or God, but Guru Nanak wanted to bring God on earth and make it the Kingdom of God by being an Instrument of His Altruistic Will. Sikhism is not a quietist, a monastic or a salvation system such as appear when cultures are in decay, and religious men isolate themselves or withdraw from the mainstream of life, But, McLeod by his method of suppression and misrepresentations makes a complete distortion - of the Sikh ideology. On the second issue too McLeod's writings are a reckless misrepresentation which are considered both libellous and sacrilegious, because these are incorrect and are damaging in character to the custodians of the Bir, the Sikh Community, and the Sikh Scripture. For, McLeod's insinuation is that the Sikhs

are a community who have gone to the extent of forging their scripture in order wrongly to support and sustain a belief in the symbol of Keshas (unshorn hair), although the same had not been prescribed by the Guru, and that the Sikh Scripture revered by the community as Guru, is an unauthentic and forged Granth. The gravity of McLeod's statement is enhanced by the fact that he made these statements not only without examining the two Birs, and without considering and discussing the available and relevant > literature on the subject, but also while knowing full well that Dr Jodh Singh after his meticulous page by page examination of the Kartarpur Granth, and categorically recorded that there was no alteration, deletion, or obliteration at the concerned page 703, as asserted by Dr McLeod.

Equally incorrect and irresponsible are McLeod's statements about the Punjab problem. One of the principal demands, on the basis of which the entire Sikh agitation started, has been that the allotment of 75 percent of the Punjab river waters, and also hydel power, to non-riparian states, was not only unconstitutional, but ruinous for the entire future of the state and its people, and its agriculture and industry ; and, as such, the matter should be placed before the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court for adjudication. This and other principal demands are still unmet. But McLeod has written that in a flush of magnanimity, the Prime Minister has met most of the Sikh demands.

There is another significant point which needs to be mentioned regarding the suitability of a scholar to man a chair for the study of the Sikh religion. Sikhism categorically assumes that both the spiritual and the material components operate in history. But some scholars have faith only in materialist and mechanist philosophies of life, denying completely the operation of the spiritual element in the empirical world. Sikhism, and most other religions hold a different view. For them spiritual element is the base of all moral life. Collingwood's following words also seem to express that idea : "The discovery of a relation is at once the discovery of my thought as reaching God and of God's thought as reaching me, and indistinguishable from this, the performance of an act of mine by which I establish a relation with God and an act of God's by which he establishes a relation with me. To fancy that religion lives

either below or above the limits of reflective thought is fatally to misconceive either the nature of religion or the nature of reflective thought. It would be nearer the truth to say that in religion the life of reflection is concentrated in its intensest form, and that the special problems of theoretical and practical life all take their special forms by segregation out of the body of the religious consciousness, and retain their vitality only so far as they preserve their connexion with it and with each other in it." But materialists, Marxists and mechanists deny the spiritual element and seek to interpret all phenomena of life, including moral life, as responses of the individual to the environment and its forces. For them even moral life is just a 'defence mechanism or a reaction formation', to the impacts of the social and other environments. Sikh belief as in the Guru Granth is entirely opposed to such a view. We completely deny the reductionist or the materialist methodology of the study of religion (for amplification of this point see Chapter 2 of Advanced Studies in Sikhism). It is entirely a different matter, if the University would like to study the Sikh religion from the materialist or Marxist point of view. But, for obvious reasons, the Sikh Community would not like to have their religion studied by a methodology which is fundamentally opposed to the doctrines of the Guru Granth. It would virtually be like a country wanting to establish a chair for the study of capitalist economy and then to import a Marxist from the USSR to man the same. We have stressed this point because it has been conveyed to us that Dr. McLeod is stated to be a non-believer.

It is, indeed, unfortunate, although it seems quite relevant to state, that since the adverse criticism of McLeod's book, 'Evolution of the Sikh Community' in the Journal of Sikh Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, (copy despatched separately) there has been a discernible fall both in the level of his scholarship and what is more sad and distressing to say, in the observance of his proper academic ethics in his general books on Sikhism or its history.

I. In 1984 he produced for the Manchester University (UK) a Textual Source Book on Sikhism' under the University programme of bringing out 'source books' on all major religions. But the bibliography which McLeod gave was extremely biased in so far as

he excluded every standard book on Sikhism and Sikh History which gave a view opposed to his own. But, he included some books which had hardly any merit, and which had not appeared in any other standard Bibliography, their only merit perhaps being that they supported McLeod's view. Following is the list of books excluded :

1. All the books of H.R. Gupta, Ph.D., D. Litt., on Sikh Gurus and Sikh History. Gupta is the greatest authority on Sikh history and has devoted over 60 years entirely to teaching and research in the subject. He has been Head and Professor of History in the Panjab University and elsewhere for the longest period. His five volumes on Sikh history are the most detailed and comprehensive work on the subject.
2. Dr. A.C. Bannerji, Professor of History, Jadavpur University, West Bengal. He has devoted a life time (over 40 years) of research in and teaching Sikh History. Not even one of his works appears in the bibliography.
3. Dr. Indu Bhushan Bannerji's works are also another set of interpretative books on the subject. He is virtually the pioneer of the Bengal School of Sikh History.
4. J.D. Cunningham's History of the Sikhs is the first standard and original work on the subject. Subsequent books on Sikh history are mostly considered to be based on it.
5. Duncan-Greenlees's, 'Gospel of Guru Granth'. It is the only authoritative and interpretative work in English on the Guru Granth.
6. Dorothy Field's, 'Religion of the Sikhs' an interpretative book.
7. All books of Dr Professor Sher Singh on Sikh Philosophy. His book 'Philosophy of Sikhism' is a London University Doctorate thesis, the only interpretative work in English on Sikh philosophy.
8. Dr. Avtar Singh's (Head Department of Philosophy and Dean Academic Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala) book 'Sikh Ethics'. It is a standard text book at the same level as S.K. Maitra's book, 'Hindu Ethics' in the field of academic studies of Hinduism.

9. Professor Dr. S.S. Kohli's books which are over two dozen on Sikh religion. He has been Professor and Dean of Academic Studies at the Panjab University, Chandigarh.
10. Professor Jagjit Singh's works, 'The Sikh Revolution', and 'Perspectives on Sikh Studies'. These are the only interpretative works on Sikh History which specifically and comprehensively deal with McLeod's Jat theory and find it to be baseless.
11. Daljeet Singh's works on Sikh Mysticism and Sikh Ideology, the only works making a comparative study of Sikhism and other Higher Religions of the world.
(In this connection see enclosed correspondence with the University and Dr. McLeod)

II. Similarly, in his work 'The Sikhs' published in 1989 he has excluded two books, 'The Sikh Tradition', edited by Gurdev Singh (containing articles by half a dozen specialists in Sikh Studies, published in 1986) and Daljeet Singh's Commemorative Lectures delivered at the University in July, 1987. Whereas 'The Sikhs' is virtually a reiteration of McLeod's writings in his book 'Evolution of Sikh Community', these two books specifically pick up all the wrong formulations of McLeod and seek to controvert them authoritatively and completely by essays from specialists in the field.

III. We have already stated that in making his slanderous statements in his books 'The Evolution of the 'Sikh Community*' and 'The Sikhs' he had excluded about half a dozen books which had specifically dealt with the issue of the authenticity of Kartarpuri Bir and the Banno Bir of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The surprising part is that McLeod is very loud in claiming authenticity of his views on grounds of his having employed latest Western methodology. But one wonders if the art of suppression and misrepresentation of a contrary view is one of the unknown factors of such methodology. Whatever be the views of McLeod or his supporters on the issue, we on our part find it difficult to appreciate or accept a display of such academic ethics or method as a part of scholarly expression.

It is our request that the University may kindly have the

issues examined and considered for further suitable action. The University would, perhaps, naturally like to have the response of Dr. McLeod before making an appropriate decision. We are also endorsing a copy of this letter and the note to a group of Sikhs in Toronto area. After due consideration of every aspect, it is for the Sikhs of the Toronto area to decide whether they would like to support a programme of having a Chair, the incumbent of which has been continuously making irresponsible, incorrect or libellous statements relating to the Sikh Scripture and the Sikh ideology. In fact if even a small part of McLeod's assessments of Sikh religion were correct, then why have a Sikh Commission to examine him Sikhism is no separate religion ?

We do not think that the umbrella of academic freedom is available to one who insists on making irresponsible and defamatory attack against a community, its religion and its Scripture. Evidently this decision has to be made by the University and they have as much right to make their own decision on the issue, as the Sikh community of Toronto have regarding their support for the Project.

However, if the Board of the University suggest, we should be glad to send a team of scholars for a seminar or a discussion with any designated Committee or members of the University. In that case, we should like to have a copy of the response of Dr. McLeod.

We are separately sending books relating to the two issues :

1. Sikh Tradition.
2. Sikh Ideology.
3. The Sikh Revolution.
4. Kartarpuri Bir and
5. Advanced Studies in Sikhism.

This material would be necessary for the assistance of any academician or committee the University may appoint. We are also enclosing a list of persons who, subject to their availability at the time of the call, would be willing to visit Toronto for a seminar or a discussion of the two issues concerned. However, if the Unive-

rsity desire that they would, in addition, like to have the views of our Associations on other issues, the same procedure of having
McLeod
have to be followed.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosures:

K. S.Mann
Secretary

Institute of Sikh Studies,

On behalf of

1. List of scholars
2. Copies of correspondence with Manchester University.
 1. Institute of Sikh Studies, 959, Sector 59, Chandigarh (India)
 2. Academy of Sikh Religion & Culture, Patiala (India),
 3. The Khalsa Dewan, Ludhiana (India),
 4. Council of Sikh Affairs, Chandigarh (India).

Before we deal with the issues concerned, it seems relevant to give a few facts as a background. The Punjab is the homeland of the Sikhs and there has been a Christian mission in the Punjab almost since its annexation by the British. The clash between the Christian missionaries and the Singh Sabha is an old story. In fact, the rise of Singh Sabha movement is attributed to the inroads which the Christian missionaries and the Arya Samajists were making in the Sikh sphere. But, since the rise of the Akali movement in the twenties, and more especially since Independence, the activities of the mission have been apparently static. A few decades back, the Christian mission at Balala started a cell to study Sikhism from the Christian angle. As to what was the objective of this cell is not understood, but an obvious aim could be to study the seeming weaknesses of the Sikh religion in order to further the progress of the mission. McLeod has been for over a decade a functionary of the mission, and probably one of the first members of this cell. Here it is also necessary to indicate the views of Dr. McLeod as the result of his Sikh studies, mostly crystalized in his book, "The Evolution of the Sikh Community". He writes (a) that Guru Nanak, or for that matter Sikhism, has 'contributed no new thought to the then existing religious teachings in India, and Sikhism their tenents evolving and changing in response to the environment; (b) that the Sikh faith originally did not sanction militancy but militarisation appeared as the result of an influx of Jats in the Sikh fold, Jats being violent in their character. By resort to militancy from the time of the fifth Guru onwards a virtual denial of the system of Guru Nanak took place; (c) that the story about the Amrit ceremony and the creation of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi day, 1699, is not correct, and the entire history about the episode and the subsequent events has to be rewritten; (d) that the five Kakars (m >ols) were not prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, but those are Jat cultural symbols, which got slowly adopted by the other Sikhs; (e) that Sikh Gurus were never serious or sincere in removing

easte differences, and that Jats lament that the Gurus made no Jat as a Guru; (f) that it is incorrect that Guru Gobind Singh appointed the Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru, and even till the rise of Singh Sabha the acceptance of Guru Granth as Guru was an unestablished convention, and; (g) that the Sikh Scripture has been changed or forged, particularly to suit the Sikh Rahit of keeping the hair, by deleting from the Kartarpur recension a so-called hymn which referred to the alleged Mundan ceremony of the Sixth Guru.

The net result of the above statements that have appeared in the writings of Dr. McLeod (collectively in his book 'Evolution of the Sikh Community') is that Sikhism is hardly a religion and that it is a sect without any fixed principles, without any originality, and with changing institutions and character, sometimes even conflicting in their nature. Because, even if a part of the above assertions were true, Sikhism could hardly claim to be a consistent cult, much less a Higher Religion.

Since McLeod's long association with the Christian Mission in Punjab appeared evidently to prejudice or affect his veracity, he has now started taking the plea that he is no longer a Christian or a believer. We are not sure whether this seeming lack of consistency or stability of character is an asset or a liability, but his protestations or announcements about his having no affiliation with any religion after the adverse review of his works, are indeed significant. Whatever be its import, it is amusing to know that some of the scholars on whose works he mainly relies for his views, and whom he eulogises for their scholarship, are those who have turned their own coat more than once. It is in this background that, for the sake of brevity, we shall take up only two of the above assertions of McLeod, namely, (i) that Guru Nanak made no departure from the earlier Indian religions, and (ii) that the Sikh Scripture is of doubtful authenticity, and its contents have been changed, fabricated or deleted to suit the evolving Sikh practice of accepting the Jat cultural feature of keeping hair as a Sikh religious symbol. The distortions that Dr. McLeod has been making, are, we find, so baseless that these would make a rational person believe that he is out to attack the very foundations and the identity of the Sikh Religion. Therefore, Dr. McLeod's career background indicated above becomes meaningfully relevant.

I. On Sikh Ideology :

Dr McLeod wrote in his book 'Evolution of the Sikh Community' that Guru Nanak gave no new religious thought. He also wrote that his religion is a combination of principles drawn from Vaishnavas and Nathism, which are both Hindu systems. Again in his latest book 'The Sikhs' he writes, "If we seek origin of the Sikh tradition, the place to look for is surely the wider area of Hinduism, and specifically the teachings of the Sants. Nanak did not found Sikhism, for that would have meant founding something which already existed." His clear suggestion is that the Guru made no departure from the Indian prevailing religious thought.

But, the factual position given below shows that no founder of a religion in the East had so revolutionised the religious thought of India, as did Guru Nanak.

(1) Broke dichotomy between the spiritual and the empirical lives :

In all the Indian systems including Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Nathism and the Sant Tradition, there is a clear dichotomy between the spiritual life of man and his empirical life. In these systems, both kinds of life cannot go together; and, in fact, the empirical life is considered a hinderance in the pursuit of spiritual objectives. But Guru Nanak has propounded and emphasised just the opposite views, namely, an integral combination of both the kinds of life. He says, 'The person incapable of earning his living, gets his ears split, i.e , turns a Nath Yogi and becomes a mendicant. He calls himself a Guru or a Saint. Do not look up to him, nor touch his feet. He knows the way who earns his living and shares his earnings with others". The Guru deprecates the Yogi who gives up the world and then is not ashamed of begging at the doors of householders.

(2) World real :

The basis of creating dichotomy in the Indian religious systems is that for them empirical life is either unreal (Mithya) or a bondage or a suffering or an unwanted combination of the spiritual and the empirical components, which has to be broken. But, Guru Nanak repeatedly emphasises that the world is real, it being "creation of God". He calls it a 'beautiful garden', saying "True are thy worlds and the universes, True are the forms thou

Greatest" ; also 'God created the world and permeated it with His light."

(3) Rejected asceticism and monasticism :

As a consequence of their views indicated at (1) and (2) above in all earlier Indian systems monasticism, asceticism and Sanyasa were recognised and recommended as essential means of spiritual growth. Even the Sants like Namdev, Kabir, and others, have clearly suggested withdrawal from life. Namdev says : "If it had been possible for him (Sankka) to see God while carrying the duties of a householder, the great Suka would not have gone to the forest to see God. Had it been possible for people to find God in their homes they would not have left them to find Him outside. Dr. Schomer finds a strong ascetic bias in the Kabir Granthavali. Referring to the Sants, Ranade writes, "Mystics of this period show an all absorbing love of God which would not allow a rightful performance of one's duties before God-absorption." 'The conflict between the rightful performance and all-absorbing love of God has existed at all times and in all countries. But it seems the saints of this period were inclined to lean in the latter rather than in the former direction, and exhibited an all absorbing character of God realisation. God indeed is an all-devourer, and it seems from the examples of these saints that He devours the performance of one's own natural duties". Similarly, Niharranjan Ray says, "They had no other social purpose in view than to make better individuals from out of the group that assembled around them. Their aim seem to have been the individual, not the society in any significant sense." "These leaders seem to have been individuals working out for their own problems and towards achieving their personal religious and spiritual aims and aspirations." But Guru Nanak clearly denounces such means and practices. He says, "One gets not to God by despising the world". "The God-centred lives truthfully while a householder".

(4) Householders' life accepted

Another departure Guru Nanak made, was his emphasis on householder's life and social responsibilities. This consequence of his combining the spiritual and empirical life was so great and the departure from the earlier systems was so radical that Guru

Nanak and his successors emphasised and demonstrated it by accepting for themselves a householder's life and by carrying on vocations for their own living. The important point is that the acceptance of a householder's life was not an alternative method of spiritual growth. In fact, Guru Nanak rejected the claim of his ascetic son to be his successor, and the Second and the Third Gurus, while they included everyone in the Sikh Society, specifically excluded the ascetics from entering the Sikh fold. The obvious reason was that in Guru Nanak's spiritual system the acceptance of social responsibilities is a religious function of the 'superman' or the spiritual seeker.

(5) Total social responsibility accepted

The social responsibilities accepted by the 'superman' or the seeker, relate to the ideas of service, sharing, and resisting social or political pressures or evils. These become his essential duties and functions. This is the reason why Guru Nanak very specifically detailed and commented upon the social, administrative, religious and political evils, injustices and practises of his times. On the one hand, he criticised the role of Brahmins, Yogis, Jains, Buddhists, Mullahs, and, on the other hand, he denounced the working and role of officials, political rulers and invaders. In his famous Babar Vani he not only denounced the brutalities of the invaders and the weakness of the local rulers to provide security to their people, he even complained to God for allowing the strong to oppress the weak. The lesson of this statement of his is very clear and emphatic, namely, that protection of the weak and securing safety, justice, and peace for the people, are the responsibilities both of God and Godmen and the religious society they create. These hymns clearly bring out that for a Godman the creation of a religious society that should ensure social justice and resist political oppression and invasion is an essential part of the role of a religious leader. That is why it has been stated by Narang that the steel of Guru Gobind Singh's sword was welded by Guru Nanak. That is also why Guru Nanak's first step after his enlightenment was to take a Muslim low caste as his first associate during his tours. Considering the caste structure and caste prejudices existing in that period, this step was extremely revolutionary.

Guru Nanak's insistence on creating a new society and the institution of succession have to be seen in this light. Because, as Max Weber has stated, the caste system and the caste order were so strong in the Indian life, that only a social order outside its sphere could exist and survive. The significant achievement of the Sikh society both in raising the status and life of the lower sections of the Indian population and in eliminating political oppression are the obvious and significant results of the two steps Guru Nanak took. For, it is well known that leaders of the Sikh society were mostly from the lowest sections of the population, and there was hardly any from the traditionally ruling castes of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This achievement of the practice of equality and fraternity in the life of the Sikh society, can be appreciated if we know that after 1947 the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers of practically all the Indian states were Brahmins. It is important to find that while there was religious and scriptural sanction to the caste ideology in the Indian life, it was Guru Nanak who criticised the Vedas for approving of this discrimination.

(6) Rejection of Varnashram Dharma

Varnashram Dharma is an essential element of all Hindu systems. In fact, there could be no Hindu without his belonging to one caste or the other. Even today a sizeable social and religious Hindu opinion is asserting that the elimination of caste will mean the destruction of the Hindu society. In fact, religious progress in Hinduism means ascent in the order of Varnashram dharma. In the Sikh society Guru Nanak categorically rejected its validity and criticised the Vedas for having given sanction to it. Social compulsions apart, Guru Gobind Singh completely eliminated its validity by the Amrit ceremony, and the Nash doctrine, making a complete break with all the earlier religious and social systems and prejudices. True, the Sants, many of whom belonged to the lower castes, did reject the caste ideology. But their approach remained entirely negative, because they never pulled themselves out of the Hindu fold. On the other hand, the Sikh Gurus calculatedly formed and nurtured a separate society with separate institutions thereby weaning away the Sikhs from the Hindu sphere. Whatever be the social compulsions and prejudices which exist in

all societies, the institution of Varnashram dharma, determining the religious progress of man, is a completely dead dogma in the Sikh society, while, on the other hand, despite all the efforts of the state and Mahatma Gandhi, even today entry to many of the Hindu temples stands barred to the Sudras.

(7) Status of women raised

In line with his thesis of combining spiritual life with the empirical life of man, Guru Nanak took the revolutionary step of giving equality to women and raising their status. In the then existing religious systems and social structure of the times, this move was really unthinkable. It is important to find that Vaishnava saints like Shankradeva, Vedantists like Shankra, and Naths considered a woman to be an evil and a temptress. In Vaishnavism women were not accepted as Vaishnavas, and a saint like Bhagat Kabir, who is considered a mesogynist, calls woman a 'black cobra', 'pit of hell' and 'refuse of the world'. In practically all religious systems of the times woman was considered an impediment in the spiritual path and a second grade citizen. In Hinduism women were classed with Sudras. Actually, downgrading the position of women, monasticism and asceticism, and celibacy, all three go together in almost all religious systems; but Guru Nanak rejected all three of these institutions. He not only deprecated the lowering of the status of woman, but she was also given equality with man. As a consequence, the Third Guru, when he created districts of religious administration appointed women to head some of them. In a specific hymn, Guru Nanak emphatically says : "Why call women impure when without women there would be none ? Why call her low, when she gives birth to great men?" The contrast between the position of woman who was considered either a temptress, sin-born or low in all the earlier religious systems and the views of the Sikh Gurus is so glaring that the change could only be spiritually inspired and never be a reaction to the environment, which was wholly different in its approach.

(8) Ahimsa

Invariably, all earlier Indian religions accept Ahimsa as a cardinal virtue. But it is Guru Nanak who clearly rejected

Ahimsa. In a long hymn he ridicules the very idea that non-meat-eating was an act of piety. He wrote, "Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat eating.. They do not know what is flesh and what is non flesh, what is sin and what is non-sin". "There is life in every grain of food we eat." "There is life in the fuel or the cowdung the Brahmin uses in his kitchen." He asserts that the very processes and transformations of life themselves involve the loss of life. Guru Nanak was very particular in clarifying this issue, because while he was, on the one hand, putting on his society the responsibility of bringing about social justice and resisting political oppression and tyranny, he did not want to fetter the Godman or his society with the hurdle of Ahimsa. Guru Nanak calls God 'the slayer of the enemies or villains'. Obviously, where God is the destroyer of the tyrant, the seeker cannot be expected to observe Ahimsa. In contrast, it is significant that Bhagat Kabir, who is the greatest exponent of the Sant tradition, believes in Ahimsa. He wrote : "The goat eats grass and is skinned. What will happen to those who eat meat?" On the other hand, the use of meat in the kitchen of the Gurus is a historical fact. Here it is relevant to mention that in Hinduism the use of sword in war is a caste duty of the Kshatriyas and not a religious duty for every individual. As an example, there is the historical fact that while the armies of Mehmud Ghaznavi were breaking the idols and plundering the temple, inhabitants of three hundred villages who had gathered at the spot, were busy chanting Mantras to avoid the menace, apparantly because use of arms was beyond the scope of their sanctioned religious duties. Thus, in the matter of Ahimsa, asceticism, celibacy, withdrawal from the world, attitude towards women, and social responsibility, Vaishnavism, Vedantism, Nathism and the Sant Tradition, on the one hand, and the Sikh Gurus, on the other hand, are poles apart.

(9) A New Mission :

Guru Nanak clearly announced a new mission with a new ideology, a new goal, a new methodology, a new world-view and a new scripture. Guru Nanak clearly announces his prophethood, when he says, "I speak what the Lord commands me to convey", and further in the Sidh Gosht he adds that his mission is, with the

help of other Godmen, to ferry men across the troubled sea of life. It is significant that this statement about the Bani (hymns) being the commands of God appears quite repeatedly in the hymns of Sikh Gurus. It is plain that the announcement of a new mission and a new prophethood was emphatically made by Guru Nanak himself. In their own religious idiom of the times, understandable to the people and the masses, this announcement, being present in the Guru Granth, is made both by Bhai Gurdas and the Janamsakhis.

(10) A new ideology with a new religious experience :

Our brief narration given above shows how the Sikh ideology is radically, and, in some parts, diametrically different from the other religious systems in India. But the basic reason why it is so new, is that the Guru's religious experience about God is that "He is all Love, and the rest He is Ineffable. "This mystic experience of the Guru is completely different from the other Indian Religious systems in which the ultimate reality is 'sat-chit-anand', the same being a quietist concept. As against it love expresses a clear, dynamic and creative concept which intimately links God to the world, love being the fount of all values and virtues expressible in the world. It is this religious experience of the Gurus that determines the entire Sikh ideology. It is in this context that Guru Nanak says : "If you want to play the game of love, step on to my path with thy head on your palm. Once you come on to my path, be prepared to lay down thy life without any fear. "The same truth is repeated by Guru Gobind Singh, when he declares, "Let all heed the truth I proclaim : Only those who love, attain to God". Since Guru's God of love or Naam is the treasure of values and virtues, the seekar has to live a virtuous life, for these can be expressed only in a becoming world.. (For details as to how the entire Sikh ideology is based on the concept of God is love, see pages 88-112 of the Guru Tegh Bahadur Memorial Lecture, Punjabi University, Patiala, published in July, 1987).

(11) Goal of life:

Such being the ideology of the Guru, a new goal of life has clearly been specified by Guru Nanak in his Japu Ji. He first asks the question : "How to be a True man (Sachiara) and break the

wall of falsehood ?", and then replies : "The way is to carry out the Will of God." And God being a God of Love, His Will is attributive and altruistic. Guru Nanak further emphasises the authenticity of virtuous living when he says : "Higher than everything is Truth, but higher still is truthful living". There are numerous hymns in the Japu Ji and other parts of the Guru Granth which stress that it is entirely by our deeds that we are assessed in His Court, and that it is by our deeds that we become near or away from Him. Naam or God being the Ocean of values, the Guru repeatedly prays to him for being attuned to His Will. It is stated that "he reaches the highest stage whom God benevolently yokes to His Naam." In all the concerned hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib the goal of man prescribed is to be the active instrument of God's altruistic Will or Naam, the fount of all love and virtues. Thus, the Sikh prayer is not for Moksha, but for "millions of hands to serve Him."

(12) Methodology:

As noted above the methodology of religious progress which the Adi Granth prescribes is of altruistic deeds. Since God is "Eyes to the blind, milk to the child and riches to the poor, "the religious path laid down is the practice of moral deeds, since it is "love, contentment, truth, humility and virtues that enable the seed of Naam to sprout" ; and, "good, righteousness, virtues, and the giving up of vice are the ways to realise the essence of God". Again it is by "self-control and discipline that we forsake vice and see the miracle of man becoming God". For, true living is living God in life, God or Naam being Love. In short, in Sikhism no repetitive practice, rituals, or pure meditation is of any use, since the Guru says, "Every one repeats God's name, but such repetition is not the way to God." Naam being the Ocean of values, Naam Simran does not mean the use of any repetitive practice or meditation only. Naam Simran implies being in tune with Naam or being filled with Naam and giving expression to Naam or Love in the performance of altruistic deeds in life. The Gurus, wherever they described the attributes of the superman, indicate his being gifted with Naam, spontaneously compassionate, gracious and benevolent. McLeod has clearly misinterpreted the meaning of Naam, Naam Simran and 'Naam, Dan, Ishnan'. Two things have been repeatedly emphasised in the Guru

Granth Sahib, namely, that Naam means imbibing and living the qualities of Naam, 'no Bhakti being possible without good deeds' and that it is purely by our deeds that we are assessed as being near or away from God or Naam. Words like 'expression of Naam in life' (Naam Parkash) and being filled with Naam, (Naam ratte) clearly express the creative or attributive aspect of God which Naam is. In fact, to state that a repetition of the word Naam or any other word, is the means to the achievement of Naam is a contradiction in terms. For, Naam being the qualitative, creative and dynamic aspect of God, only virtuous activity can bring man either near or in conformity with Naam or God's Will. God, as stated above, being 'the Destroyer of evil' 'and the vicious, McLeod's statement: "It is, moreover, evident that much of the developed Sikh tradition is missing" is an evident misstatement and a distortion. The fundamental point is that whatever is within the sphere of God, is automatically within the sphere of responsibility of the Godman or the seeker. • Actually it is the lack of understanding the 'Babur Vani' and 'Guru Granth' that McLeod suffers from. How can the Godman shirk his responsibility, when Guru Nanak criticises the rulers, the invaders and God Himself for allowing the weak to be oppressed by the strong? As to the words 'Naam-dan-Ishnan' which appear in the Granth Sahib, the meaning is that Godman is blessed with the gift of Naam, compassion and purity. For, Ishnan in Guru Nanak's Bani means only washing away the dirt of Haumen or sin. That is why in The Guru Granth the Super-man, who is in tune with Naam, is profusely described as full of virtues. (For meaning of Naam, Naam-dan-Ishnan and Naam Simran see Shabdarth, and translations of Gopal Singh, Manmohan Singh and Talib, as also the paper on Naam in "Advanced Studies On Sikhism).

In the above context it is necessary to state that Guru Nanak in his Bani has laid down four social responsibilities on the Godman and the society. The first is of securing and practising equality between man and man. Guru Nanak clearly deprecates all YOGic, ritualistic and meditational practices, and states 'that he alone is a Yogi or Godman who treats every one alike. The Second social responsibility is of equality between man and woman and this too is emphasised, as indicated above, by Guru Nanak in his Bani, The

third social responsibility is of work and production. Here too it is Guru Nanak who has emphasised that 'he knows the way who earns his living and shares it with others'. The fourth responsibility is of reacting against wrong, both as an individual and as a member of the Sikh society. Here the meanings of Babur Vani and God being the 'Protector of the weak' and 'Destroyer of the tyrant', are clearly expressive of the role and responsibility of the spiritual seeker. Here Guru Hargobind's clarification to Sant Ramdas of Maharashtra is very clear when he says that Guru Nanak never gave up the world and his sword was for the protection of the weak and the destruction of the tyrant. The point for emphasis is that in whatever system there is integration between the spiritual and the empirical life of man, the acceptance of social responsibility in all fields becomes an essential attribute of the religious man. That is exactly the reason that Guru Nanak calls this world 'the place for righteous activity (Dharamsal)'.

(13) World-view :

Both the surveys of Maxweber and Schweitzer bring out that all Indian religions are life-negating and suggest withdrawal from life. This is quite true of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Vedanta and even the Sant Tradition. All these Hindu systems as indicated above, involve withdrawal from life, and denial of social responsibility. Evidently, systems that recommend Ahimsa, asceticism, monasticism, Sanyasa, celibacy or withdrawal from life, reject every kind of social involvement, much less social responsibility, as an unwanted bondage. S.K. Maitra who has surveyed the ethics of all Hindu systems says, "that the common feature of all doctrines of the ideal life, or Moksha, is the conception of ideal as a negation, or at least as a transcendence of the empirical life proper, and that this state is thus a supermoral spiritual ideal, rather than a strictly moral ideal". It is so, because all these systems accept a clear dichotomy between the spiritual path and the empirical path, and thus, life-negation is a natural and logical consequence of all these religious systems and their world-view. But, Sikhism, as the hymns and lives of the Gurus express and demonstrate very clearly, has a world-view of life affirmation, since in the Sikh ideology there is an inalienable combination bet-

ween the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. For, whatever is within the domain of God, is also within the sphere of operation of the God man. In short, Sikhism is a whole-life religion with a world-view entirely opposed to that of the other Indian religions.

(14) **New Scripture :**

Vedas and Upanishads are without doubt the scriptures of all Hindu systems. But Sikhism completely denies their authority, and Guru Nanak even calls some of their 'injunctions to be wrong'. The Sikh Gurus were so clear and particular about the independent and separate identity of their religious system and the complete originality and newness of its character, that they took very significant steps which no other religious leader in the world had done. They specifically compiled and authenticated the Sikh Scripture. Secondly, since the time of its compilation in 1604 A. D., it is the complete repository of and the final authority on the Sikh ideology and its doctrines. Since the Gurus called it revealed Bani, it has been regarded as the Shabad having the sanction of God. The Tenth Master took two important steps in this regard. First, he introduced the Nash doctrine, thereby making a complete and final break with all other Indian ideologies. Neither the Vedas and Upanishads, nor any other religious systems is given any sanction or accepted as authentic. We all know that the Bani of Bhagats in the Guru Granth is a selection. It is accepted only to the extent it is in consonance with the doctrines of the Gurus. And even where differences seem to be suggested, the Gurus have made adequate comments and clarifications. The Bani of Bhagats outside the Granth Sahib is not given any authenticity. Secondly, he made the Sikh Scripture not only as the exclusive vehicle of the Guru's message, but also gave it the status of the Guru, Guide or the Teacher of the Sikhs. The creation and sanction of Guru Granth as the sole scripture of the Sikhs reveals that the Gurus were very clear and conscious of its independent and separate character, and wanted their ideology to remain as such without chance of any addition, alteration, or any departure from its authenticity or contents.

(15) **God** never incarnates :

Saivism, Vaisnavism and practically all other Hindu systems believe that God incarnates. But in the very first hymn of the Guru

Granth, Guru Nanak describes Him as 'un-incarnated and Transcendent'. The Fifth Guru even states that 'Cursed be the tongue that says that God incarnates'. Accordingly, Guru Nanak's idea of God or Reality is clearly opposed to the Hindu concept of God. True, some Sants also deny the theory of incarnation of God, but their other fundamental concepts regarding woman, ahimsa, celibacy, withdrawal from the world, social responsibility, etc., are entirely different from those of Sikhism.

In his book 'The Sikhs' in the Chapter on the Sikh Doctrines he has not quoted a single line from the Guru Granth to support his views, but he has chosen a word 'Akal Purakh' (Timeless Being) which is practically unknown to the Guru Granth. He picks up another word 'Alakh' (ineffable) to support his view and goes on to say that Sikhism is a life-negating religion, adding "Many more are words which designate His attributes, commonly as negatives which attempt in the traditional style to define Reality in terms of what it is not. Indeed the word Akal or time less is a conspicuous example". First, there is virtually no religion in which God or Reality has not been described by these two words. Secondly, McLeod is fully aware that in the very first line of the Guru Granth, Guru Nanak describes God as Karta Purakh (Creator person), Enlightener and Gracious. Again in the very first hymn of Japu Ji He calls Him "Ever-Creative and happily looking at His creation with a Gracious Eye." There are hundreds of words in the Guru Granth and Jap Ji Sahib describing the positive, creative, and benevolent attributes of God whom the Guru calls the "Ocean of Virtues" and 'Immanent in His creation', which He has 'created as a place for the practice of righteous living (Dharam Sal)'. God being 'Love*' and 'Love' being dynamic, Guru Nanak's call to the spiritual seeker is : "If you want to play the game of love, come with your head on your palm". His emphasis on deeds is epitomised in his hymn, "Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is truthful living". He adds that man's spiritual assessment depends on his deeds. And yet McLeod's description of Sikh God seems evidently and deliberately to exclude innumerable positive, creative, and dynamic attributes of God. Even the most elementary student of comparative religions knows that Sikhism like Islam is a religion of the deed and the goal of man is

to be the instrument of His Altruistic Will. (Copy of Review appearing in University Journal sent separately).

It is in the above context that we have to see, examine and assess the value and veracity of McLeod's observations about the identity or originality of the Sikh thesis in the Guru Granth or the Bani (hymns) of Guru Nanak.

II. AUTHENTICITY OF KARTARPURI BIR

Sikhism among the world religions has one unique feature. The Gurus were so far-sighted and sagacious that they took two inviolable measures regarding their thesis. First, the Fifth Guru himself compiled the hymns of the Gurus, stated by them to be the revealed word of God, Shabad or Bani, and authenticated it as the Scripture of the Sikhs. The Tenth Master added to it the Bani of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and made the Guru Granth as the Guru of the Sikhs, being the repository of the Shabad or revealed word. Second, a convention was established that no one had the authority to change even a word of it, much less delete anything or add anything to it. The Seventh Master disowned his son Ram Rai whom he had himself sent to the Emperor as his representative when he found that he had misquoted just one word in a hymn, Ram Rai and his descendents had since then to leave Punjab and live at Dehra Dun in U.P. His followers are one of the groups who stand excommunicated. Similarly, the Tenth Master was very angry with a Sikh who just mispronounced a word in the scripture so as to give the hymn a slightly different meaning. Therefore, as the Adi Granth is the sole Guru of the Sikhs, and because there is this long standing Sikh tradition, and injunction, it is unthinkable and sacrilegious for any person to suggest, much less to make, even the slightest change in the Guru Granth. What Dr. McLeod, with his long career in the Punjab mission, and with his consciousness of the Sikh tradition and the reverence in which the Guru Granth is held has written or alleged about the Guru Granth and its authenticity has to be seen in the above context.

The above has been recorded not to suggest any prejudice or bigotry on the part of the Sikhs, in fact, the Sikhs have been quite open in their dialogue with other religions and of the few persons who have closely examined the Sikh scripture at Kartarpur, two,

namely, Dr. Lochlin and Dr. Archer, have been Christians. As to the seeming bias or slant of the writings of Dr. McLeod, the following statement of Dr. King of the University of California, Sant Cruz is quite relevant :

"Whatever Dr. McLeod intended many readers will ask his books the wrong questions and get the wrong answers. The books to an uninitiated reader seems to reiterate the notion that a great amount of Sikh belief appears to be based on uncritical religiosity. The reader seeking the well-springs of what Sikhism is will not be assisted. The only successful opponent to thousands of years of passing conquerors must have something that "makes him tick". Nowhere in these books is there an attempt to tell us what it is."

McLeod's assertions : .

In his Cambridge lectures published in 1975 in his book 'Evolution of Sikh Community' Dr. McLeod wrote quite at length to attack the authenticity of the Kartarpur Bir, the original Granth compiled by Guru Arjan. "The problem which confronts us arises from a comparison of the Kartarpur and Banno versions." After giving two preliminary arguments he continues : "A third factor is the presence in the standard printed editions of two fragments, corresponding to two of the three additional Banno hymns." "There seemed to be only one possible reason for the appearance of these two fragments. The bulk of the hymn in each case must have been deleted leaving a small remainder which was faithfully copied into the standard printed text." "A fourth point seemed to clinch the issue. The Banno text of the missing portions indicated good reasons for later deletion, particularly in the case of the *Ramkali* hymns by Guru Arjan. This hymn describes the puberty rites conducted by Guru Arjan at the initiation of his son Hargobind. The rites follow a standard Hindu pattern and in the third stanza there is a reference to the manner in which the boy's head was shaved. This feature is in obvious contradiction to the later prohibition of hair-cutting. When the prohibition became mandatory, not merely for Jat Sikhs but also those of other castes, the reference in the hymn could only be regarded as intolerable." "By this time the hypothesis

will have become obvious. The conclusion which seemed to be emerging with increasing assurance was that the widely disseminated Banno version must represent the original text; and that the Kartarpur manuscript must be a shortened version of the same text. A few portions must have been deleted because they could not be reconciled with beliefs subsequently accepted by the Panth. This much appeared to be well established."

Comments :

The interesting part of the assertions of Dr. McLeod is that the issue about the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir and the Banno Bir, which according to McLeod is the original and of which, he says, the Kartarpuri Bir is a copy, had been examined quite variously, and thoroughly by a number of scholars and the concerned literature stood published. Before Dr. McLeod's observations there had at least been six relevant publications, apart from some articles and papers, about the authenticity of the Banno Bir and the Kartarpuri Bir.. In the forties G.B. Singh published a book saying that Banno Bir might be the original and Kartarpur Bir was, perhaps, a copy of it. Like McLeod, he had not at all cared to examine the Kartarpur Bir before writing his book. Because of the blatant and known misstatements of the author, the publication created a strong reaction. Dr. Jodh Singh brought out a scholarly book 'Prachin Biren Bare'. After a detailed study of the Kartarpuri Bir, he concluded that G.B. Singh's assertions were a tissue of lies and highly irresponsible in so far as he had never examined the Kartarpuri Bir, and had seen the Banno Bir in a very casual and cursory manner, and had found the recorded date of Banno Bir of somewhat doubtful character. In another publication 'Adi Biran Bare', Dr, Sahib Singh examined in detail the story about the alleged preparation of the Banno Bir in 1604 A.D., and came to the conclusion that it was a myth. After that there were three other publications. Dr. Jodh Singh and Mahan Singh had made a detailed page-by-page and line-by-line study of the Kartarpuri Bir. In his book, 'Kartapuri Bir. De Darshan', which gives a complete picture of every page of the Kartarpuri Bir, Dr. Jodh Singh, categorically asserted the authenticity of the Bir and that there was entirely no deletion of

the alleged parts of Ramkali hymn. Secondly, he stated that blank spaces in the Kartarpuri Bir formed a conclusive proof of its originality, because of the method employed by the scribe in compiling the Bir. Since the Banno Bir consisted of 928 pages, Kartarpuri Bir could never be a copy of it, since it was constituted of 1948 pages. Actually, all the handwritten Birs known so far have practically the same number of folios as the Banno Bir. It was only in the Kartarpuri Bir that the number of its folios was more than double that of the Banno Bir, and this because of its original method of writing and the consequent blank spaces. Dr. Jodh Singh's book is the most detailed and authentic record of the Kartarpuri Bir and its contents. Mahan Singh, who was the co-scholar with Dr. Jodh Singh when they examined the Kartarpuri Bir, also brought out a separate book, 'Pavan Pavitar Adi Bir da Sankalan KaP'. In one sense Mahan Singh's publication is even more important than that of Dr. Jodh Singh, because he had published his book after a close examination of the Banno Bir, and had permanently nailed the lie that Kartarpuri Bir could be a copy of the Banno Bir. For, whereas the Kartarpur Bir clearly recorded Samat 1661 as the year of its compilation, Mahan Singh's examination with a magnifying glass revealed that the Banno Bir had been copied in Samat 1699, 38 years after the compilation of the Kartarpur Bir; although its custodians had tried unsuccessfully to change the year of its writing from 1699 to 1659 in order to give some credence to the Banno story. So as to bring out an authentic Bir the SGPC had deputed a number of scholars, under the supervision of Principal Harbhajan Singh of the Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar, to make a careful and meticulous examination of the Kartarpur Bir. As the result of this examination and subsequent check and verification by another committee, an authentic and faultless Bir was published by the SGPC. Principal Harbhajan Singh also brought out his publication, 'Gurbani Sampadan Nirnai'. In this he recorded two facts, that not only the Kartarpur Bir did not have the alleged parts of Ramkali Hymn, but a large number of old hand-written Birs of the 17th century did not have that hymn.

The surprising part is that before making his categoric state-

ments recorded earlier, throwing pointed doubts on the authenticity of the Sikh Scripture and alleging its having been tampered with so as to bring it in conformity with the Khalsa beliefs, Dr. McLeod had neither studied the books of Mahan Singh, Harbhajan Singh, Dr. Sahib Singh and Jodh Singh's book 'Prachin Biran Bare' nor had he examined either the Banno Bir or the Kartarpuri Bir. One wonders if such a lapse accompanied by clear assertions about the Kartarpuri Bir having been ineptly tampered with/fabricated, could be unintentional. Especially, because Dr. McLeod is aware of the work of Dr. Jodh Singh, stating unambiguously that • the Kartarpuri Bir had no deletions of the alleged parts of the Ramkali hymn which had never been recorded there. McLeod is both aware of this assertion and has also quoted the same, and yet he has gone on with his detailed arguments alleging fabrication of the Kartarpuri Bir. It is significant that he not only makes the above baseless assertions, but on the basis of that he also makes the statement; The doctrine of the Scriptural Guru had not yet been accorded the exclusive authority which it was later to acquire, and current needs could be adequately served by the numerous copies (both complete and in part) which were in circulation'. The significant change he says came with the rise of the Singh Sabha.

After the publication of McLeod's book two other publications appeared. The first was a paper read by Professor Pritam Singh in a conference abroad after his detailed examination of the Banno Bir. He not only confirmed that the Banno Bir had been recorded in Samat 1699, 38 years after the compilation of the Kartarpuri Bir, but also stated that the additional hymn alleged to be in Ramkali Rag was a clear later interpolation, even in the Banno Bir of Samat 1699. Earlier, a University Team of Scholars sent by Prof. Pritam Singh to examine the Banno Bir had also reported similarly. In addition, the Punjabi University published in July, 1987, a 'Commemorative Lecture' delivered in May 1987, on the subject of the authenticity of the two Birs, after a close examination of the Kartarpuri Bir. In this publication a detailed statement of all the earlier scholarly publications on the subject including the statements of Dr. McLeod in his book 'Evolution of the Sikh Community' were discussed and examined with the conclusion that

McLeod's statements both at Cambridge and at Berkley regarding the two Birs, which he had made without examining any of them, were baseless and misleading.

In 1989 Dr. McLeod published his book *The Sikhs'* in which he recorded : "A textual problem of considerable significance is indicated by a comparison of the Banno recension with reports concerning the actual contents of the Kartarpur manuscript." "The theory allows that the Kartarpur manuscript may well be the document recorded by Bhai Gurdas, but adds that if this is indeed the case the original version has subsequently been amended by obliterating occasional portions of the text." The shocking part of the publication is that he reiterates his earlier assertions about the lack of authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir without making the least reference either to the literature published on the subject discussing the issue before his publication of 1975, or to the published paper of Prof. Pritam Singh or to the University publication of 1987 which detailed and discussed all the literature on the subject including the statements of Dr. McLeod.

In the background of Dr. McLeod's career and in view of our discussion a number of issues are quite clear: i) McLeod's statements that Guru Nanak made no departure whatsoever from the earlier Hindu traditions in laying down the doctrines of his system, that (ii) the non-formulation of the doctrine of the scriptural Guru until the time of the Singh Sabha and (iii) that Kartarpur Bir was both unauthentic and tampered with have a clear link, meaning and direction in relation to the Sikh religion and the Sikh society. It would be straining human reason too much to suggest that such baseless things could be said about another religion and its scripture with either a sense of propriety and responsibility or with a requisite or sound level of scholarship.

McLeod's complete black out of all literature contrary to his views, while preparing his source book, and his omitting all references to the literature regarding the Kartarpuri Bir and Gurdev Singh's book brought out to contradict all the formulations of McLeod, while publishing his book *'The Sikhs'* in which he reiterates his observations regarding lack of originality of Guru Nanak's thesis and the fabrication of the Kartarpuri Bir are extremely significant in their import and their aim.

Phone : 23187

**THE INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES
CHANDIGARH.**

.....127, Sector 9-A,

.....Chandigarh

Ref. No.

Dated : Dec. 14, 1989

To :

Dr Milton Israel,
Director,
Center for Asian Studies,
University of Toronto.
Toronto, Canada.

Dear Sir,

Kindly refer to the letter of the 12th October 1989, written in behalf of this Institute and three other major organisations deeply interested in the study of Sikhism, addressed to the University of Toronto through you, on the misrepresentations of Sikhism made by Dr McLeod who holds one of the important Chairs under you. Propagation of baseless and unfounded views against a world religious faith is serious enough. Presence in a leading University campus of one who has been doing libellous propaganda, makes it quite objectionable. No wonder, therefore, that our members are genuinely agitated over the present situation. I, therefore, take this opportunity to draw your personal attention to our previous letter and the note enclosed with it, again, and to request that we may be informed of the response of Dr McLeod and your own reaction to the views expressed by us.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

(K.S. Mann)

CC. Mr. K.S. Chhatwal
Dr. J.S. Mann

CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

University of Toronto

February 6, 1990

Mr. K.S. Mann,
Secretary,
Institute of Sikh Studies,
959 Sector 59,
Chandigarh, India.

Dear Mr. Mann:

I write in reference to your letter of October 12 concerning Professor W. H. McLeod. Those of us who have been involved in the development of the Sikh Studies programme at the University of Toronto have considered ourselves very lucky to have attracted a scholar who we believe is one of the major contemporary interpreters of the Sikh experience in the 19th century. Although we recognize that some of his work is controversial, his views have always been presented in the form of balanced conclusions and questions for further consideration. It is also clear that at the base of McLeod's scholarship is a profound respect for Sikh tradition.

In Toronto, he has stimulated a growing interest in and understanding of Sikh religion and history. Those in the University and in the local Sikh community who have met and read McLeod have come to respect him as a teacher and scholar although not necessarily to agree with all of his conclusions. We recognize, however, the significant contribution to scholarly dialogue that he is making and in particular the efforts he has made to associate the study of the Sikh religious tradition with those of other religious traditions better known and better understood in this part of the world.

There are clearly dangers facing Sikhism in the Punjab and abroad but How McLeod is not one of them. If there is an intention to pursue serious dialogue in a scholarly or reasoned context there is no problem ; but personal attacks and unfounded charges will not be very productive. Your letter was cast in such confrontational language that it left virtually no room for this kind of exchange, and it was largely for that reason that it has taken me so long to respond. I am not an expert in Sikh studies and, therefore,

I shall not attempt to respond to the detailed critique incorporated in your letter. I have, however, benefitted from the advice of a number of scholars in the field in reaching my conclusions.

We in Toronto are confident that we are engaged in a significant and useful enterprise, and that Hew McLeod is playing an important role. In the future, if we are able to retain the shared commitment of academy and community, a new generation of scholars of Sikh history and religion will continue the search and the dialogue, and Toronto may become an important centre of scholarship regarding Sikh tradition. In this city and country with its large and growing multicultural population, this is a significant goal. We want to make Sikhism a part of our evolving Canadian national identity.

Thank you for your interest in our activities.

Yours sincerely,

Milton Israel,

Director.

*Room 2057 Sidney Smith Hall 100 St George Street Toronto Ontario
M5S 1A1 Telephone 978-4294*

Phone : 23187

THE INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES
CHANDIGARH

127, Sector 9 A,
Chandigarh

Ref No, Dated: April 4, 1990

Dear Dr. Milton Israel,

Thank you for your letter of the 6th February, 1990. The reply has been considered by the four organisations mentioned in my letter of the 12th Oct. 1989. Their reaction is briefly reproduced below.

Your intention to make Toronto an important centre of scholarship regarding the Sikh religion is indeed gratifying and praiseworthy. That is also the reason why we should like to state the perspective that had prompted us to address you. For, we would not like Toronto to become ab initio a place of controversy.

May be, because of his earlier associations or other reasons, Dr. McLeod has been quite known for his anti-Sikh writings, and his latest books have only confirmed that reputation. Even as far back as 1978, the Council of Sikh Affairs, Chandigarh, had addressed the Government about the offensive writings of Dr McLeod, Dr. J.S. Grewal and their group. Besides, Dr McLeod is a non-believer, and a non-believer's capacity to interpret religious theology or issues can at best be quite limited, there being a fundamental constraint of approach. That is possibly the reason why many of his interpretations on basic issues appear quite artificial.

You have referred to dangers facing Sikhism in the Punjab and abroad. Problems of the Sikh community in the Punjab are political and transitory. Ideological problems are not peculiar to Sikhism. In fact all religious faiths face challenges from materialistic philosophies and scienticism. The Sikh ideology has a very sound base, and can stand as before any deliberate attempt at misrepresentation. Of course, you are aware that in India there is a body of political opinion which is interested in propagating that Sikhs have no independent religious or ethnic identity.

It was a welcome news that your University had created a Chair of Sikh Studies, partly funded by the local Sikhs, who had the evident object of projecting Sikhism in its true academic perspective. But the irony and anomaly arose when the person chosen to man that chair was a non-believer, who has repeatedly been asserting that (i) Guru Nanak gave no new religious thought or teachings to the people, (ii) the Sikh Scripture, which for the Sikhs is their Guru, is unauthentic, containing inept and motivated changes, (iii) The Sikh Gurus were not quite sincere in removing caste distinctions, etc. Except euphemistically, it is difficult for those who have read Dr. McLeod, to accept the claim that he has a profound respect for Sikhism, or that his writings are furthering any comprehension of Sikhism. Since his basic understanding of Sikhism is faulty, his writings, as before, will continue to supply grist to the mill of those who are politically interested in denying the ideological identity of the Sikh religion.

It was this background that led the Sikh Community of North America to invite Dr. McLeod and other scholars of all shades of opinion to a Conference of Sikh Studies, held in Dec., 1988 at Los Angeles. But Dr. McLeod and his friends like Dr. J. S. Grewal and Dr. H. S. Oberoi, conveyed their inability to attend it, although before and even after it, they have been contributing to or participating in such conferences.

Your observation that Dr. McLeod is a specialist in 19th century Sikh experience, is quite puzzling. For, neither his earliest books nor his latest books of 1989 relate to events of the 19th century, except very marginally. In fact, there is no known publication of his dealing specifically with any of the two major events of the 19th century, namely, the rule of Ranjit Singh and the Singh Sabha Movement. The reviews of Dr. McLeod's books of 1989 in the University and other journals suggest that he has not only reiterated his views asserting the lack of originality or identity of the Sikh ideology, and the tampered-with character of the Sikh Scripture, but has also dealt with, although superficially and distortedly, the current crisis in the Punjab. In fact, it is some of his out-of-the-way and uninformed observations about the continuing problems in the Punjab, and the presence of a picture on the jacket of his

book, *The Sikhs*, which had earlier appeared on a propaganda pamphlet of the Government of India, that has raised many eyebrows about his suggested political leanings.

It was in this context that we chose two fundamental subjects, about the originality of Guru Nanak's thesis, and the authenticity of the Sikh Scripture, appearing in his latest books of 1989, obtained notes from scholars, and addressed you for an academic dialogue among scholars after obtaining a response from Dr McLeod. For, an academic expression of opposite or conflicting views, is an accepted mode of understanding variant points of view.

We are at a loss to understand how reference to Dr. McLeod be avoided, when what are in question, are his very writings and their factual and logical contradictions and inaccuracies. We are indeed unable to follow the logic that while it is permissible for Dr. McLeod to make from an academic platform unfounded and blasphemous statements like Sikh Religion having no ideological identity, the Sikh Scripture being unauthentic and ineptly tampered-with, and the Sikh Gurus having not been sincere in eliminating caste distinctions,, it is offensive to academic ethics or confrontational to propose a dialogue among differing scholars after following the normal academic procedure.

It was unfortunate that Dr. McLeod did not participate in the Conference at Los Angeles. We note with regret your inability to arrange a forum for discussion as proposed by us, although, it is understood, Dr. McLeod and like-minded scholars are being invited to a separate gathering.

Undoubtedly, it is your privilege to make any decision in administering University affairs. But as organisations concerned with Sikh Studies we felt it necessary to convey our views regarding Dr. McLeod's writings and the reactions those have continued to evoke. It is difficult for us to understand how a scholar whose writings have displayed inadequate knowledge of Sikh theology and who is reluctant to have an academic dialogue on fundamental ideological issues, can promote an academic understanding of

Sikhism or train scholars in Sikh religion and its comparative study. You will kindly appreciate that we would not have bothered you, unless there was a consensus of opinion that his writings are unrepresentative and suffer from the faults pointed out earlier; and, as such, those would be far from helpful to the ends you have in view. We believe that as a spokesman of the Sikh religion and culture, his expositions would be incorrect and therefore damaging.

Thanking you again for your consideration and detailed response.

Yours sincerely,

(K. S. Mann)

Dr. Milton Israel,
Director,
Centre for Asian Studies.
University of Toronto,
Canada.

THE INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES
CHANDIGARH

127, Sector 9 A,
Chandigarh

Ref. No. Dated: May 3, 1990

Dear Dr. Milton Isreal,

Kindly refer to the correspondence resting with our letter of the 4th April 1993. The matter has been considered again by the four organisations in the light of information subsequently received, and I am desired to address you as follows.

2. It appears that the basic issue has been missed. Dr. McLeod has been writing both against the independent identity of the Sikh religion and the authenticity of the Sikh Scripture (Adi Granth). Opposite but authentic views have been expressed both from Universities and otherwise. There have been more than half a dozen specialist publications by scholars controverting the views of Dr. McLeod as being without any basis. This was a normal academic debate, since Dr. McLeod and other scholars like King, Kohli, Avtar Singh, Mansukhani, James Lewis, Daljeet Singh, Trilochan Singh et.al. have the right to express their views in any manner they like. But the anomaly arose, when the Sikh community of Canada approached the University of Toronto for the creation of Chair of Sikh Studies, and the University chose Dr. McLeod to occupy it. For the contradiction between the objectives of the community and the known views of Dr. McLeod, which have been considered a misrepresentation of the Sikh ideology, is too evident to be ignored.

3. Dr. McLeod's basic formulation is that Sikhism ha* no independent ideology of its own, but it is a branch of Hindu religion, being a combination of Vaishnavisra and Nathism. He has been repeating this statement in all his books including his two latest publications of 1989, namely, 'The Sikhs—Their Religion, History and Society' and 'Who Is a Sikh'. In 'The Sikh' he wrote": "If we seek origins of the Sikh tradition the place to look is surely

the wider area of Hindu tradition and specifically the teachings of the Sants. Nanak did not found 'Sikhism', for this would have meant founding something which already existed." His entire interpretation in the two books is based on the thesis that Sikhism lacks originality and separate identity. Thus the key question is whether his formulation about the Sikh ideology has any validity. If his views are without any basis, his work, besides being superficial, would obviously and actively be defeating the objectives of the Community in creating the Chair meant for an authentic presentation of the Sikh ideology. As such, we feel, he is hardly the right person to be in-line with the objectives of the Community, because, in fairness to Dr. McLeod, he cannot be expected to change his views, and, in fairness to the Sikh Community, the University should not insist on continuing a scholar who, besides being a non-believer, has been considered by practically every specialist scholar of Guru Granth to be misrepresenting the Sikh ideology.

4. Dr. McLeod's position regarding the authenticity of the Adi Granth, also creates a similar anomaly. At Cambridge and Berkley he doubted the originality of the Kartarpuri Bir, saying that it suffered from inept deletions aimed at concealing an alleged incident regarding the shaving of hair. These assertions were repeated in both of his books in 1989. The University publications by Dr. Jodh Singh and Daljeet Singh and work of other scholars who carefully examined the Bir, categorically state the deletions are not there, and that the Banno Bir which Dr. McLeod calls the original one, was, according to the date recorded on the Bir itself, was written 38 years after the scribing of the Kartarpuri Bir. It is not easy to ignore that the University and other publications appeared years earlier, and Dr. McLeod has made his serious allegations in spite of being aware that this scripture is the Guru of the Sikhs. Secondly, he has never examined the Kartarpuri Bir or Banno Bir himself. Thirdly, he must also be aware that those who had carefully examined the Kartarpuri manuscript, have clearly recorded that there is no such deletion as alleged by Dr. McLeod, and his observations have been held to be incorrect. We wonder if anyone can fail to observe the irony and the absurdity that the Sikhs as a community

should be worshipping as authentic the Adi Granth as th:ir Guru, while their own representative scholar at the Toronto University should be calling it tampered with and suffering from inept deletions.

5. Undoubtedly for the Sikhs both the issues regarding the independent identity of the Sikh religion and authenticity of the Sikh Scripture are fundamental. Dr. McLeod also recognises this. For he continuously makes these assertions, and considers them important enough to be emphasised in his latest books of 1989. It is because Dr. McLeod's assertions on the very fundamental issues were clearly unfounded, that we felt it essential to approach the University pointing out the importance of the subject and the necessity of an academic dialogue in order to clarify the issues and dispel all misunderstanding. It is in this context that we obtained the necessary notes from Experts and proposed a formal academic discussion after obtaining written response from Dr. McLeod. But your letter of the February 6, 1990 indicated that the proposal was not acceptable to you, or may be, Dr. McLeod was inclined to avoid it. In stead, we understand, the University is now organising a seminar on sensibilities of Sikhs to the impact of 'Modern' research, inviting selected participants, none of-whom is a scholar in the discipline of Sikh religion, much less has any significant publication on Sikhism or anyother religion. It is indeed amazing that while discussion on fundamental issues is being avoided, persons from fields other than that of Sikh Theology are being called to endorse the untenable views of Dr. McLeod.

6. Two things are obvious, and are in question, namely, Dr. McLeod's interpretation of Sikhism and his methodology of study without reference to the Guru-Granth. If the very foundation of his work and interpretation are faulty, the question of his views and their effect, becomes irrelevant. Scholars to be invited for discussion, should be such as have studied the Sikh religion, comparative religion and Guru Granth Sahib.

7. It is indeed amazing and unfortunate that real issues are being ignored and peripheral and irrelevant issues are being taken up on the basis of an uncalled for assumption that Dr. McLeod's views and methodology are correct, and that the sensibilities of the

Community have unnecessarily been affected. We cannot help feeling that the proposed move would only sidetrack the issue, since Dr. McLeod cannot find a single scholar of Sikh religion to support him on the two fundamental issues, concerning Sikh ideology and the authenticity of Sikh Scripture.

8. We presume that you are aware that the two books of Dr. McLeod published in 1989 have been reviewed in the University and other journals, and found to be very faulty, both on the point of his interpretation of the Sikh Religion and his method of studying Sikhism without reference to the Guru Granth Sahib, and the essentials of the systems with which he compares it. Relevant extracts from a review published in the Punjabi University journal 'Punjab: Past and Present' are reproduced below :

"In making a comparative study of religious doctrines of Nathism, Vaisnavism, Sants and Tslam, with those of Sikhism, McLeod follows no standard or analytical methodology of identifying the metaphysical position, the goal, the religious practices, the overall worldview of a system, or whether it is life-negating or life-affirming. Nor does he use available sources for the purpose. Accordingly his description or assessment of different religions remains patchy and erroneous and in the case of Sikhism it is exactly contrary to what Sikhism really is. He calls Sikhism a religion of interiority, of the practice of nam simran which 'ranges from repeating of a word or a mantra (One which summarily expresses the divine reality) to the singing of devotional songs and beyond that mystical concentration of the most sophisticated kind'. We are not aware of any hymn in the Guru Granth prescribing any particular system of meditation or use of any word or mantra for repetition, and McLeod has not cited any hymn in support of his claim. Except Prophet Mohammad, Guru Nanak is the only man of God who preached a religion of the deed, involving an inalienable combination between the spiritual life and empirical life of man. McLeod quite ignores the contrast between the life-negation of Sants who avoid social responsibilities, deem woman to be temptress and accept Ahimsa, and, the life-affirming system of Guru - Nanak who completely rejected monasticism, celibacy and Ahimsa, and accepted full social participation and responsibility. It is

common knowledge that, almost invariably, ahimsa, celibacy, monasticism and life-negation go Nanak who rejected all four of them and organised a society with new faith and motivations."

Hence our repeated request that the two basic issues essentially require a dialogue. Discussion on them is unavoidable. For these form the very basis on which McLeod builds all his writings and structure of interpretations.. These would fall or stand according as the basis is incorrect or correct. It would, therefore, hardly be relevant to discuss marginal and inconsequential issues by ignoring the fundamental subjects.

9. We took the liberty of addressing you only after the publication of Dr. McLeod's books of 1989, in which he repeated and emphasised his views on the two issues. On your or Dr. McLeod's reluctance to hold the dialogue we remained content with merely pointing to you the anomalies of the situation. But on being given to understand that a conference is being arranged by the University at the cost of the Sikhs presuming the correctness of the very issues which have been profusely controverted by scholars of religion, appears to us very unfortunate and illogical.

10. Evidently, there is nothing in Dr. McLeod's books modern or scientific. Nor are scholars holding different conversant with modern or analytical methodology. In fact, Dr. McLeod's statements in his books calling his opponents traditional scholars, is arbitrary and presumptuous. Also, Sikhism is not a tradition. It is a revelatory religion clearly defined in the Granth Sahib, wherein the Gurus themselves call their hymns the Word of God.

11. Accordingly, we emphasize that in order to make the seminar fruitful only the two basic subjects should be discussed. The object is to create academic understanding of Sikh religion, and not to justify any particular stand or to have an argumentative debate on peripheral and inconsequential issues. Therefore, the participants should be such scholars as are specialists in Sikh

ideology and have published one or more books on the subject

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Kharak Singh Mann)

Dr. Milton Israel,
Director, South Asian Studies,
Univ. of Toronto

CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

University of Toronto

April 30, 1990

Mr. Gary Singh,
Merit Investment Corporation,
55 University Avenue, Suite 1000
Toronto, Ontario M5J 2P8.

Dear Gary :

I write in reference to the Sikh Studies symposium which we hope to organize in response to the concerns raised by a number of Sikh scholars and other members of the Sikh community in North America and the Punjab. It is clear that the enhanced profile in recent years of critical scholarship concerning Sikh history and religion has stimulated a debate between those who work from within the tradition and those who study it from outside. We have, as you know, received substantial correspondence in the last year concerning this matter and in particular concerning the work of Hew McLeod. We believe that the best way to respond would be in the form of a symposium or dialogue in which scholars who represent a range of perspectives could meet and share directly their interests and concerns. In that context we propose a one-day meeting : "A Dialogue : Sikh Tradition and the Impact of Critical Scholarship on Religious and Community Sensibilities" on August 25th. We have chosen that day in order to associate the meeting with a gathering of the 33rd international Congress of Asian and North African Studies. The Congress will bring almost 2,000 scholars to the University including many from India, and would provide an ideal setting for this discussion. Although we are concerned with the issue as it applies to Sikh tradition, it is one which has produced debate in the study of all the major world religions.

We propose to organize this dialogue around four issue sessions, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, each approximately 2 hours in length. Each session will consider one major issue designed to provide an opportunity to raise most of the questions noted in the current debate :

1. Critical scholarship and religious sensibilities.
2. Sikhism—an evolving or received tradition.
3. The use of ethnological and anthropological evidence in regard to Sikh identity:
4. Sources for the study of Sikh tradition and how to use them.

We would like to invite eight scholars to participate, four whose work rises out of the 'Western' scholarly tradition and four whose work is informed from within the Sikh tradition. We have contacted the four "western" scholars we wish to invite.

Professor N.G. Barrier, University of Missouri

Professor Harjot Oberoi, University of British Columbia

Professor W.H. McLeod, University of Otago

Professor J S. Grewal, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies

All of these scholars have agreed to participate. In addition we propose to invite the following :

Dr. Avtar Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala

Dr. Madanjit Kaur, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Mr. Daljeet Singh

Those who have approached us with their concerns regarding our Sikh Studies programme have referred to the work of these four scholars in support of their position.

We plan to invite these eight scholars to prepare 10-page position papers on one of the four dialogue issues. For each session of the meeting we would invite one scholar from each group to speak for 20-25 minutes on the topic of their position paper. We would hope that all the position papers would be completed and sent to us in sufficient time to allow them to be distributed to all participants. Following the formal presentation of the position papers we would have a 50-minute discussion among all the participants.

We plan to tape the discussion and publish the eight position papers along with an edited transcript of the discussion. We believe this is an important undertaking and hope it will be possible to achieve our goal. If we are going to do this, however, it is essential

that we move quickly. In particular we need a commitment of financial support. Travel costs for Barrier, Oberoi, McLeod and Grewal will be underwritten either by us or through other forms of external funding. We shall need, however, approximately \$15,000 in order to fund the cost of international travel for the other four invitees, local hospitality, recording and other administrative expenses and the publication of the book. As you know we do not have the funds to support this kind of undertaking. If this meeting is going to take place those who have sought this dialogue will have to provide the resources. Before we are able to send a formal University invitation to the four Indian scholars noted, we must have deposited the funds in the appropriate University business office.

On the basis of my conversation with you, it is my understanding that you will contact potential supporters in the community and respond to me as early as possible. I must reiterate that there is very little time left for delay.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Milton Israel
Director

1. *Room 2057 Sidney Smith Hall 100 St George Street Toronto
Ontario M5S 1A1 Telephone 978-4294.*

2. *xc ; Professor J. T. O'Connell
Mr. Suresh Bhalla*

INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES

127, Sector-9,
Chandigarh (India)

May 10, 1990

Dear Dr. Milton Israel,

Thank you for your letter of April 30, 1990 forwarded to us by Mr. Gary Singh. The matter has been considered by all concerned. In fact, we have already conveyed to you our clear views about the proposed seminar and what should essentially form the subject for discussions. Repeatedly, and also in his latest books of 1989, Mcleod has raised and questioned fundamental issues about the originality of the Sikh religion and the authenticity of the Sikh scripture (Adi Granth). Without being presumptuous, we proposed a dialogue on these very two basic issues, Mcleod's assertions being unfounded. You are well aware that his views on Sikh ideology have been seriously criticised since these are not only in contradiction to the hymns in the Guru Granth but are not based on any standard or scientific method for the study of religion.

The study of religion is an independent and separate discipline, fundamentally assuming the spiritual dimension and base of man, radically opposed to all materialist, Marxist, reductionist or even some anthropological and phenomenological theories. The basic question is what is the authentic ideology of Guru Granth. Ontology or theology of a religion is fundamental to it and its understanding. Obviously, it is irrelevant what a non-believer, Marxist, materialist or an anthropologist thinks of a religion, its prophet or its scripture. Can any one teach or understand Christianity, without reference to the Bible, or Islam without the study of Quran ?

But, the choice both of subjects and of the scholars invited demonstrates that the seminar has basically nothing to do with Sikh religion, Sikh scripture or the chair for the Study of Sikh religion. The three scholars are not even competent to speak about the Sikh religion, its scripture or ideology. And that is exactly what we have been saying about Mcleod, namely, that he has repeatedly been proclaiming the non-identity of the Sikh religion, entirely in contra-

diction to the hymns of the Guru Granth, and the non-authenticity of the Sikh scripture without ever having examined it. And now scholars are invited, who have virtually no knowledge of the Guru Granth and its ideology.

We do not understand why discussion on the real and fundamental issues is being avoided. We should be frank enough to say that the proposal about the subjects is hardly fair. Besides being not germane to the basic issues, it is based on three untenable assumptions. First, that whatever Mcleod has written about the Sikh ideology is correct and well based. Second, that his methodology is modern, critical or scientific, which is unknown to scholars of religion in India. Third, that the Sikhs like a tribal group have unreasonably become disturbed.

It is now plain that no scholar of Guru Granth is coming forward to support Mcleod on the issues of its ideology and authenticity. For, the speakers invited are neither scholars of Sikh religion and Guru Granth nor have a known publication on the subject. In fact, Oberio has probably no known publications on any subject. They are hardly competent to present any kind of rational profile of Sikh ideology. The incongruity is too obvious to need further comments. To us this appears an evident avoidance of the problem on which we have addressed you. The ideological issues raised by Mcleod are too serious and fundamental to be side-tracked by talking of peripheral, anthropological or ethnological matters.

In fact, it is the study of Sikh religion, Guru Granth and its authentic presentation that forms the very rationale for the creation of the Chair. Merely giving grandiloquent names to any study not based on the Guru Granth would just not be helpful.

None of the proposed items being relevant and fundamental we instead suggest, as before, the following, subjects for discussion :-

1. The ideology of Guru Granth.
2. The Idea of God in Sikhism.
3. The concept of Naam in Sikhism.
4. The concept of Manmukh and Gurumukh-spiritual Evolution of Man.

5. Essentials of Sikh Ethics in Guru Granth.
6. The World-View of Guru Granth.
7. Authenticity of the Adi Granth.

The speakers would be Avtar Singh, Daljeet Singh, S. S. Kohli, Gurtej Singh, Trilochan Singh and G. S. Mansukhani.

Any three or four of the subjects could be taken up ; only such scholars would participate as have one or more publications on Sikh religion. Correspondingly, we should stress that in order to make the dialogue meaningful, only such specialist scholars (from West) have one or more publications on the Sikh ideology. If the seminar is held on the subjects proposed by us, the participants for discussion, however, may be any one. The format, the duration for the presentation and discussion, etc. are acceptable except that the length of the papers may extend to twenty pages. The cost of two of the Scholars proposed would be met by us.

It is surprising that despite Mcleod's repeated formulations about the Sikh ideology and the Sikh scripture, these subjects have just been ignored. We do not believe any one can seriously and meaningfully discuss Sikhism without a close reference to the Guru Granth and its doctrines.

We shall be grateful for an early if the proposal made by us is acceptable to the university for discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

G. S. Dhillon
(Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon)
for Institute of Sikh Studies

Dr. Milton Israel,
Director, South Asian Studies,
University of Toronto.

^ | ^ H ^ H ^ H ^ H ^ ^ H ^ H | Centre for
Studies,
University of Toronto,
May 30, 1990.

Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann,
101 W- Beverly Boulevard, Suite 103,
Montebello, California.

Dear Dr. Mann,

Professor Milton Isreal, who was going out of town for some days, asked that I write to you regarding the topics for discussion at the proposed August 1990 dialogue/debate on the impact of critical scholarship on Sikh religious and community sensibilities.

1. We see the overall title as a neutral one : there are issues with reference to what critical scholarship (as represented by certain individuals) is actually doing ; there are issues with reference to how that scholarship is being understood and reacted to by Sikhs. Both dimensions need attention.

2. We have no intention of diverting the dialogue/debate from the main points of controversy. Back in October you presented to us via Mr. Gary Singh of Toronto a list of eight specific points of criticism (together with the names of recommended critics) of the work of W.H. McLeod. (The original formulation of these may go back to Justice Gurdev Singh ; they are the same set you asked McLeod himself to respond to, I believe.) We have every intention that these points feature prominently in the proposed August meeting.

3. There are other comparable points of dispute that should be addressed also in the dialogue/debate, such as the historical evidence of janam-sahkis and the use of socio-anthropological evidence as demonstrated by Harjot Oberoi. These are issues featured prominently in your recent volume, *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*.

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4. It is very important that we get some perspective about the controversy, and not get trapped in specific details. Many of the problems relating to scholarship on Sikh religion seem not to be peculiar to the Sikh situation. There are significant analogues in the wider context of scholarship in relation to any religio-social communities of faith. This also should be addressed and appreciated.

5. Accordingly, we have proposed four general areas for discussion, within which all the eight points of criticism of W.H. McLeod may be addressed along with other crucial points. Some of the points may be treated in more than one of the broader areas. The preferences of the invited speakers as well also should be taken into consideration before a final agenda is fixed.

6. It is not we, but the Chandigarh group, who are proposing an altogether different kind of meeting from the sort that you and we and Gary Singh and his Toronto associates have been trying to put together for several months. What their proposals come down to is a purely theological (they prefer the term 'ideological', but it amounts to the same thing) discussion restricted to a panel of Sikh (scriptural and systematic) theologians selected by themselves. This sort of thing is fine in its own place : in a Sikh school of theology answerable to a Sikh religious community (as its analogue would be fine in a Christian school of theology). It is out of place in a multidisciplinary university.

Your original proposals, as we understand it, and ours make room for the participation by Sikh theologians (or experts in ideology) and allow much scope for addressing scriptural and systematic theological/ideological issues : but as part of a wider panel of experts dealing with a wider array of issues and from multiple disciplinary perspectives. We are neither shifting ground nor evading difficult issues. What we are insisting upon is what points of controversy be addressed responsibly as controverted points, i.e., from the several perspectives that bear upon the issues and are parties to the controversy. This is what a multi-disciplinary university is all about.

As a provisional guideline, I would suggest the following allocation of specific issues to four broad areas of the programme.

First Session : Critical Scholarship and Religious Sensibilities

Of the eight specific issues raised against W.H. McLeod's work, the first (on the originality of Sikh religion, on Guru Nanak as founder) might well be addressed in this first session. The issues of concern to K.S. Mann and his Chandigarh associates ("the independent identity of the Sikh religion" and "the authenticity of the Sikh scripture") may be addressed initially in this session also, and they are likely to be raised in other sessions as well.

This opening session also will address the wider context of academic treatment of such sensitive matters in the case of other religious traditions ; and the relationship of such scholarship to the life of a community of faith.

Second Session : Sikhism— an Evolving or Received Tradition ?

This session will likely explore in more depth the issues of "founder" and "ir dependent identity," but also may address points two (on the continuity vs. disparity of teachings of the several gurus), four (on Guru Gobind Singh's precise role in establishing the Khalsa), and seven (on Guru Gobind Singh's intentions vs. later historical factors in determining that the Granth Sahib would succeed the humans Gurus).

As in Session One, the specifically Sikh issues will likely be addressed, by some participants at least, in the context of analogous problems encountered elsewhere in the history of religion.

Third Session : Use of Enthological and Anthropological Evidence

This session seems appropriate for point four (on the alleged Jat influence vs. initiative of the Gurus in the militancy of the Panth) and six (on the Gurus' treatment of caste).

This session also will address the work of H.S. Oberoi (and, by extention, of any other scholars using ethnological and anthropological data and methods of research on the Sikhs) which has drawn criticism from some Sikh quarters.

Fourth Session : Sources for the Study of Sikh Tradition and How to Use Them.

This session may address points five (on the evidence for Rehat as having evolved in the 18th century vs. having been definitely settled by Guru Gobind Singh) and eight (on the evidence and implications of alleged variations in manuscripts of the Adi Granth.)

It is also the appropriate session for assessing the historical and other values of the janam-sakhi literature, and other issues of proper use of source material.

We think that this is fair and reasonable and hope it is satisfactory to you.

We are confident that the four scholars (Grewal, McLeod, Barrier, Oberoi) we have asked to represent what may be called critical scholarly research are more than able to do so. We are confident also, that the four (Avtar Singh, Daljeet Singh, Madanjit Kaur, Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon) proposed to challenge the adequacy of such scholarship — at least as executed by McLeod, Grewal and Oberoi — can do so ably. They are recognized scholars and writers, participants in your own conference at Long Beach and contributors to your volume, *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*. All are drawn from the list you proposed to us via Gary Singh.

Time is fast running out, however, if we are to convene this crucial meeting while several of the key participants are to be in Toronto (for the 33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies). You and we have already put much time and attention into discussion of such a dialogue/debate. You must decide whether you want a genuine dialogue/ debate or not.

With good wishes.

Sincerely yours,
Joseph T. O'Connell.

CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASTAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

May 31, 1990

N

Dr. G.S. Dhillon
Institute of Sikh Studies
127 Sector-9
Chandigarh, India

Dear Dr. Dhillon :

I write in response to your letter of May 10 concerning our efforts to organize a formal Dialogue in regard to recent scholarship concerning Sikh religion and history. I think I can do no better than to send you a copy of a letter which my colleague Professor Joseph O'Coonell has prepared in consultation with me as a response to an earlier letter received from Dr. K.S. Mann, the Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies in Chandigarh.

It is clear that there are significant differences of opinion and perspective concerning this subject but this is, of course, the reason why we should hold this Dialogue. I hope we shall be able to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Milton Israel
Director

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The mention of multi-dimensional approach of the University and the role of critical scholarship is equally irrelevant, since these two elements hardly appear in Mcleod's statements concerning the two issues raised by him and we certainly do not object to the use of such an approach or scholarship in defending the two ideological propositions.

We do not think it is fair, or correct to dub the scholars mentioned by us as answerable to a Sikh religious community. If there is any other scholar of Sikh theology answerable to any other community, we do not see why the University or Mcleod is not able to invite him or her to support his point of view. Had there been any worthwhile scholar of Sikh, religion, we do not think it would have been necessary to call H.S. Oberio, a scholar of anthropology or culture, who hardly knows anything about the Sikh ideology or the doctrines in the Guru Granth.

We made a request to you in October last with a specific object and point of view. Obviously, the University is either unable to arrange such a dialogue or is not interested in a discussion of the issues raised by Mcleod. We have already made it clear that unless the fundamental issues are discussed and clarified, discussion of diversionary and peripheral matters would be pointless; because that would show lack of seriousness of purpose. Nor would it be possible for our organisations to ask the scholars from whom written expression of views on concrete ideological subjects have been obtained to shift their papers to anthropological or ethnological evidence unrelated to the Bani of the Gurus.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

(G. S. Dhillon)

Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon.
for Institute of Sikh Studies

To
Professor Joseph T, O' Connell,
Centre for South Asian Studies,
University of Toionto,
Toronto (Canada).

CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

June 5, 1990

Mr. Gary Singh
Merit Investment Corporation
55 University Avenue, Suite 1000,
Toronto, Ontario
M5J 2P8

Dear Gary :

I write to follow up our conversation on Sunday concerning the Sikh Studies Dialogue we propose to hold in the University on August 25th. As a result of discussions with you and others in Toronto as well as exchanges with others in India and California, we have amended our earlier proposal. I attach for your information, and for those who may provide the financial support for this meeting, a memorandum which describes the context of recent exchanges and provides a programme outline. I shall appreciate your faxing this material to Dr. Mann in California.

As I noted in my April 30th letter to you, we have contacted of the scholars we wish to invite :

Dr. N.G. Barrier, University of Missouri
Dr. Harjot Oberoi, University of British Columbia
Professor W.H. McLeod, University of Otago
Professor J.S. Grewal, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies
In addition we propose to invite the following :
Dr. Avtar Singh, Punjabi University Patiala
Dr. Madanjit Kaur, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar
Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, Punjab University Chandigarh
Mr. Daljeet Singh

The four scholars from the *I* first group have already agreed to participate. We need to contact the four in the second group as quickly as possible in order to ascertain their availability for a meeting in August and to give them time to prepare for it. I also

noted in that letter that the cost of the meeting, including international travel for the four scholars in the second group, local hospitality, recording and other administrative expenses and the publication of the book, would be approximately \$ 15,000. We need to have these funds in the University before we are able to proceed invite the scholars from India.

The opportunity to hold this meeting in association with the Congress of Asian and North African Studies is particularly important- We do not have very much time to make the necessary arrangements. I hope we can receive a final commitment and these funds within the next few days so that we can move ahead with this important undertaking.

Best regards,
Yours sincerely,

Milton Israel
Director

INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES

127, Sector 9,
Chandigarh (INDIA)

June 7, 1990

Dear Dr. Milton Israel,

We are in receipt of your letter of June 5, 1990, addressed to Gary Singh, forwarded to us by Dr. Mann.

For the last eight months, the University has been changing its stand and the latest shift is (a) an attempt to defend the indefensible, and (b) a combination of evasion and confusion.

(A) The indefensible formulation of Mcleod about the authenticity of the Adi Granth (Kartarpuri Bir) is that it suffers from 'inept deletions'. He wrote in 1975, "A fourth point seemed to clinch the issue. Indicated good reasons for later deletions, particularly in the case of Ram Kali hymn of Guru Arjan. This hymn describes the puberty rites conducted by Guru Arjan at the initiation of his son Hargobind". "The feature is in obvious contradiction to the later prohibition of hair-cutting. When the prohibition became mandatory not merely for Jat-Sikhs but also of other castes, the reference in the hymn, could only be regarded as intolerable." A few portions must have been deleted because they could not be reconciled with beliefs subsequently held by the Panth. This much appeared to be well established."

A libel is a damaging statement which is false and the author knows it to be so. At page 97 of Dr. Jodh Singh's book, 'Kartarpuri Bir De Darshan,' published by the Punjabi University in 1968, which Mcleod has referred to in his book, it is clearly recorded that there is no deletion of the hymn of Guru Arjan at page 703/1 of the Kartarpuri Bir. So Mcleod knew in 1975 that he was making a wrong statement. Daljeet Singh who examined the Bir also clearly endorsed the statement of Jodh Singh, regarding no deletion on that page. Later Dr. Jodh Singh calls Mcleod's above statements "misleading and contrary to facts" and even

"insinuating". Daljeet Singh who delivered Commemoration Lecture (88 pages) regarding the Kartarpuri Bir, published by the Punjabi University in 1987, also calls Mcleod's above statements "incorrect, fallacious" and "misleading". The unfortunate part of these statements about the Sikh Scripture is that Dr. Mcleod has made them without examining either the Kartarpuri Bir or the Banno Bir. We do not think you will find a single scholar, who would support the above statements of Mcleod, since any one doing so would like Mcleod be only making libellous and blasphemous statements about the Guru Granth which the Sikhs hold in deep reverence. Does the University think such conduct is responsible ? This is the level and conduct of the scholar whom the University is defending, whom the University has selected and whose Chair and continuance, the University wants the Sikhs to support by their contributions ? Now, it is for the University to understand, who should withdraw his criticism explicitly in public, Mcleod who has made blasphemous statements against the authenticity of Guru Granth, the Sikh Guru, or the Sikhs who have complained against him to you. We have no doubt what should be the approach of the University where the whole academic and Sikh community is justifiably and seriously aggrieved at the unfounded and libellous observations of Mcleod against the Sikh scripture.

The above criticism of Mcleod in the published form of the University Memorial lectures has been there for the last about three years, and neither Mcleod nor his friends have uttered a word against the veracity of this published criticism. That is why we feel that your University is trying to defend the indefensible. It must answer this question and make its moral stand on the issue quite clear.

(B) Now, a few words on evasion : It is in October last that we wrote about two issues : (1) regarding the above incorrect statement of Mcleod concerning the authenticity of the Sikh Scripture and (2) about his assertions that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism and Guru Nanak said and founded nothing new in the religious field. He wrote, "if we seek origins of the Sikh tradition, the place to look is surely the wider area of Hindu tradition and specifically the teachings of the sants. Nanak did not found

Sikhism, for this would have meant founding something which had already existed". The entire burden of his two books is that Sikhism does not have a separate and independent identity. Here too we obtained detailed expression of views from experts about the revolutionary thesis of Guru Nanak and how he changed the entire religious thinking of India which no religious leader had done before. The topic of the independent identity of Sikhism and incorrect observations of Mcleod form the subject of Guru Nanak commemoration lecture of the Punjabi University, later published in the form of a book in 1984 by the Guru Nanak Foundation. The book makes a detailed analysis of the Hindu thought and Sikh thought and comes to the conclusion that the two systems are poles apart. But Mcleod in his books published in 1989 repeats his formulations, but does not record even a single hymn from the over 1400 pages of Guru Granth to support his view. Though over half a dozen scholars of religion have written against this proposition of Mcleod, not one scholar of religion has supported him. Dr.*N.Q. King wrote about the level of the books of Mcleod that "the readers seeking the well-springs of what Sikhism is will not be assisted. The only successful opponent to thousands of years of passing conquerors must have something that makes him tick. No where in these books is there an attempt to tell us what it is¹' One has never heard of a scholar of the Christian religion without any knowledge of the Bible. One wonders if there could be a Seminar on Sikhism without any one knowing much about the Sikh religion or the Guru Granth.

In spite of our repeated insistence, the two subjects proposed by us with expert and detailed notes running into twenty pages or so have been omitted from the agenda because no scholar of Sikh religion appears inclined to support Mcleod's stand. It is obvious that the reasons for avoiding the two issues proposed by us are indeed compulsive. This explains both the reasons for avoiding a discussion and how fundamentally untenable are the views of Mcleod. Instead of the two clear topics proposed by us, the overall agenda with many sub-clauses comprises an ill-assorted combination ; (1) Critical scholarship in relation to religious and community sensibilities (2) Basic Sikh ethics and injunctions of the Gurus, an

evolving or received tradition, (3) The use of ethnological and anthropological evidence in regard to Sikh identity and its continuity, (4) Scriptural sources for the study of Sikh tradition, how to use them.

Evidently, the subjects have been chosen to suit the scholars, and not specialist scholars to suit the chosen subjects.

(C) Confusion in the choice of themes : (i) The fundamental fact known to every student of Sikh religion is that Guru Granth is the sole Sikh Scripture which is accepted as the Guru or the final guide. But it is strange that this fundamental of Sikhism has been ignored and the words 'scriptures' and 'other sources' are mentioned. This untenable assumption will only create confusion. In Sikhism there is only one scripture, the Bani of the Gurus, which is the revealed word of God and is mentioned as such in the Guru Granth itself. In fact, Guru Granth is the first and the last in Sikh theology and everything is measured and tested by it. Hence the question of 'different sources' and 'Scriptures' is irrelevant and as such has been made unnecessarily confusing. Why has this happened, what is the need of this mix up ?

(ii) Confusion is also evident in wrongly splitting the subject of Sikh ideology which is sought to be discussed under about six different heads or sub-heads, (a) Uniqueness of Sikh theology is placed under the overall introductory heading of 'Critical Scholarship in relation to community and religious sensibilities'. The 'overall consideration' and the sub-heads are unconnected and relate to different disciplines, (b) Under basic Sikh ethics and injunctions of Gurus, apart from directions in the Guru Granth, questions about the ideological unity of the thought of the ten Gurus, even historical issues about creation of the Khalsa, and Reht Maryada are also mixed up. (c) The ideological question of Sikh identity is also included under the head 'Use of ethnological and anthropological evidence'. Further, not only the criticism of Dr. Dhillon about the Singh Sabha period is clubbed here but the Jat theory of Mcleod and the question of Sikh militarisation, which are primarily ideological issues and to an extent historical matters, are included. Apart from that, questions of caste are also present

under this. On the subject of caste there are more than two specific books and many papers by Jagjit Singh and others which treat 'militarisation' and 'caste' purely as ideological issues flowing from the Guru Granth. Such confusion and mix up has been done in framing the agenda that it ensures that no serious discussion can take place, (d) 'Scriptural sources and how to use them' here too confusion is there because apart from scriptural matters, questions of history are also added.

The confusion is so evident because practically under every phenomenological head, ideological issues, which should have no place there, are listed. This uncalled for splitting is done to sidetrack and totally confuse ideological matters because there is not even one scholar of religion or Guru Granth among the invitees. As already stated by us, under the garb of multi-dimensional approach, scholars like Oberoi and others, ignorant of the Sikh ideology and the Guru Granth, so often treat purely ideological issues as merely historical or sociological matters. In regard to Sikh studies this has turned out to be a common failing of those unacquainted with the Bani of the Guru Granth. In fact, quite a number of problems of Sikh studies arise because scholars trained in only one discipline like history, anthropology or sociology, and being ignorant of the discipline of religion, make observations which are lop-sided and even spurious. While nobody objects to a multi-dimensional approach, but ignorance of the religious dimension continues to be a malady with those owning only a unilateral approach as students of a phenomenological subject. Items of incongruous and unrelated subjects have been clubbed together.

One finds considerable confusion in the proposed agenda. But when the purpose of the proposal is understood, the reasons for the confusion become obvious. For the entire object of the seminar appears to be an attempt to restore the dwindling image and credibility of Mcleod. There are more than a dozen formulations of Mcleod which are baseless. At present there are over a dozen books and scores of articles that deal only with the superficial observations of Mcleod. About two dozen scholars have written against his writings. At Los Angeles alone, there were a dozen

speakers, practically every one of whom spoke about one or the other formulation of Mcleod. For example, take the seven propositions of Mcleod dealt with in Justice Gurdev Singh's book. Each of them has been discussed extensively by a specialist in that particular field. Ideological issues have been given an entirely separate treatment. Further, in the case of the issue of caste, Jagjit Singh, who is a specialist both in caste and related ideology, has extensively dealt with sociological and ideological dimensions by profusely supporting his case both from the Guru Granth and the sociological and other literature on caste. On the other hand, one may go through the whole book of Mcleod, the Sikhs, or an entire paper of Oberoi on Sikh and Hindu religious practices, but one will find it completely barren of any ideological discussion and without even a single hymn from the Guru Granth. The author would assert commonness of key theological doctrines without mentioning even one such doctrine much less supporting the assertion from the scripture. The ideological formulations of Mcleod stand discussed in over half a dozen books. But in the agenda, the ideological issue has been meaninglessly split into over six sub-heads and placed under sociological and other heads, with the overall directive heading of Critical Scholarship in relation to community sensibilities. It is impossible that ideological issues or Gurdev Singh's list of propositions could be discussed in this out-of-the-context manner. This mix-up of the agenda hardly indicates that any serious purpose can be achieved, except to show it to the community that various propositions of Mcleod have been taken care of. The mix-up in the agenda is too seriously obstructive to need further comments.

It is wrong to say that criticism of Mcleod has been ex-parte. At Los Angeles, he and his friends were specifically invited but they went out of the way to avoid it. Academically, it is doubtful if the three invitees can even superficially discuss, much less debate in depth, any formulation of Mcleod relating to ideology. But, as it is, they appear to be welcome only to endorse the views of Mcleod and not because they are in any sense competent in the field of Sikh religion. Being the only ones available they seem to have been invited to show that everything Mcleod had written is correct and the same stands supported by the scholars. We regret we have to point out all this.

It is to avoid this confusion that we chose only two issues, and only the basic ones. Discussion on them would either have shown the evident incongruity or unsuitability of Mcleod for the Chair, or the very uselessness of the Chair, if Sikhism is a part of Hinduism. However, our offer still stands.

You are well aware that Mcleod's proposition mentioned above, is today a handy political weapon that is being used against the Sikhs in the current political crisis. All the formulations of Mcleod are in line with that thinking and for that matter serve a political purpose. Mcleod's out-of-the-way expression of very shallow and wrong views regarding the current Punjab crisis has raised many doubts about the credibility or the political and academic neutrality of his functioning. Besides, the presence on the jacket of his book (The Sikhs) of a picture that prominently appeared in a propaganda pamphlet of the Indian Government increases that suspicion.

As written by Dr. J. S. Mann, even the four ideological topics suggested by him have been ignored.

We regret the University has not accepted our proposal of a concrete agenda with background notes and with a well-defined scope of discussion. No one can be happy with your agenda which apart from its incongruities is hedged with unwarranted assumptions and limitations. Besides, how can ideological issues be discussed with no one competent in the field. It is your privilege to take unilateral action.

In the circumstances, however it would be necessary for us to educate the public about the problems faced by the community and us, and present a proper perspective of the Sikh religion. We hope it will be our privilege to have your presence and cooperation then.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-

G.S. Dhillon
(Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon)
for Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh.

Dr. Milton Israel,
Director, South Asian Studies,
University of Toronto.

CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
University of TORONTO

June 12, 1990

Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon
Institute of Sikh Studies
127, Sector 9,
Chandigarh, India.

Dear Dr. Dhillon :

I attach for your information a letter which I have written to Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann in Los Angeles. It is a response both to his most recent letter and I believe can serve as a response to your letter of June 7th. We regret that it has not been possible to achieve consensus regarding the context for our proposed 'Dialogue'.

Yours sincerely,

Milton Israel
Director

CENTRE OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
University of TORONTO

June 12, 1990

Dr. Jasbir S. Mann
101 W. Beverly Boulevard
Suite 103
Montebello, California 90640

Dear Dr. Mann :

I write in response to your letter of June 8th to Mr. Satwinder Gosal which was copied to me, concerning our proposal to host a Dialogue on Sikh Studies in the University of Toronto. We have attempted to respond to your concerns but it is apparent that it will not be possible to establish a context and agenda for the 'Dialogue' that will be mutually agreeable.

I do not believe it would be useful to reiterate our arguments for a broad-based exchange on the range of issues that have concerned scholars both in North America and in India. We are weary of the charges of evasion and confusion when what we have sought to do is bring together scholars with differing perspectives to talk directly to each other concerning issues of mutual intellectual concern. We end our personal dialogue with you confident that we have done our best to achieve agreement. It seems apparent that we have to continue ploughing our own furrow and you no doubt will do the* same. I hope both our efforts benefit the development of Sikh Studies in North America and the assimilation of the Sikh community into the mainstream of North American life in terms of respect and understanding for its religion and culture. That is certainly our goal, however much it may be misunderstood.

Yours Sincerely,

Milton Israel

Director

Xc : Mr. Gary Singh
Mr. Amrik Singh
Mr. Suresh Bhalla
Mr. Satwinder Gosal
Mr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon
Professor Joseph T. O'Connell

Room 2057, Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St George Street, Toronto
Ontario M5S 1A1 Telephone 978-4294

INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES

Dear Dr. Milton Israel,

Thank you for your letter, dated June 12, 1990. The four organisations seriously felt that Dr. Mcleod's repeated assertions on the two issues were without any basis. But, we did not pre-judge them and proposed a dialogue so that the university could judge things for itself and take warranted remedial steps. In the face of these two fundamental and crucial issues everything else was irrelevant. Because if Mcleod is found unjustified in repeating that the Sikh scripture stands tempered with and Sikhism is a part of the Hindu tradition, without any separate independent identity, he is evidently unsuitable to occupy the chair which he does. And, if his statements after discussion of the two issues are found to be valid, it should have ended the matter. It is a discussion of the two crucial issues, which alone could have clinched the matter. Hence, our insistence on discussion about these two subjects and your repeated denial could cause nothing but mutual weariness.

To us it appears quite inexplicable by any system of rationality that while we should be proposing a discussion on the two issues regarding which we assert Mcleod's statements to be unfounded and incorrect, the university should be pre-judging them without discussion and declaring that "the proper thing for such critics to do is to withdraw their criticism explicitly in public and in published form"

We regret that University has said nothing about Dr. Mcleod's existing observation about the Sikh scripture without ever having examined the Bir.

Regretting your inability to accept our proposal of October 12, 1989.

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/-

G. S. Dhillon

(Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon)

on behalf of

1. Institute of Sikh Studies, 127, Sector 9, Chandigarh.
2. Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala.
3. The Khalsa Diwan, Ludhiana.
4. Council of Sikh Affairs, Chandigarh.

Phone: 23187

**THE INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES
CHANDIGARH.**

.....127, Sector 9 A,
.....Chandigarh
Ref. No. Dated July 26, 1990

Dear Dr. Milton Israel,

We intend publishing the correspondence with you. In case you have any objection, kindly let us know at your earliest.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-
G. S. Dhillon
(Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon)

Dn Milton Israel,
Director,
South Asairi Studies,
Toronto University,
Canada.

Appendix—I

Correspondence with Manchester University (Annexure to Letter, Dated, 12th October, 1989.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Manchester **M13 9PL**

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE
RELIGION

Professor John R. Hinnells

Telephone
061 - 273 3333
Ext. 3542

5th June, 1986

Dr. Daljeet Singh,
127, Sector 9,
Chandigarh,
India.

Dear Dr. Singh,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of the 7/12/85 which I am afraid has only just reached me, hence the delay in replying.

First thank you very much indeed for the kind sentiments that you have expressed at the work of the University of Manchester in relation to Sikhism. I am sorry that you feel the author of the volume *Textual Sources for the study of Sikhism* omitted some important works by the Sikhs. I will draw the attention of the author to your letter.

I am conveying the copies of the four books which you have generously given to the University to our University Librarian, and I am sure that you will hear from him in the near future confirming their receipt. We are always glad to receive books for our University quite obviously, but particularly books that the community themselves feel they wish to be studied by. It was a kind gift, which we do appreciate.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

John J. R. Hinnells

Professor of Comparative Religion

Centre for Religious Studies,
University of Toronto,
130 St George Street (14th floor)
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1.

21st July, 1986

S. Daljeet Singh,
127, Sector 9, Chandigarh.

Dear Sardar Daljeet Singh,

As he indicated to you in his letter dated 5 June 1986 Professor Hinnells of the University of Manchester has forwarded to me a copy of your letter to him dated 7/12/85. I was very pleased to learn that a copy of my *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* has come to your notice.

Thank you for the comments which you make on the bibliography which was included in the book. I entirely agree with you that the books which you list are very important titles and that all of them certainly deserve a place in any general bibliography relating to Sikh Studies. There were, however, two other criteria which were applied when the bibliography for *Textual Sources* was compiled. These were :

1. Does the book include material which relates to the specifically textual or literary concerns of *Textual Sources for Study of Sikhism* ?
2. Will it be reasonably easy for university students in the United Kingdom to consult the book?

With these two criteria in mind I felt that I should omit some standard titles and most of these appear in your letter. The choice certainly does not suggest that any of those books are unimportant. It is, of course, possible that I have made some mistakes in my choice. If so, I can only ask to be excused.

It would be of great interest to me if you would kindly comment on the actual contents of the book. Have I made an appropriate selection or are there some major passages which I have overlooked ? Are the English translations accurate and reasonably

good ? These are the questions which particularly concern me. I am anxious that the Sikh scriptures and Sikh literature should be adequately presented to the university students who use my book. It is also possible that some overseas Sikh families may find a book of this kind helpful for their children. If so, it is all the more necessary for it to attain a reasonable standard.

I shall look forward very much indeed to hearing from you. Thank you again for your interest in the book.

Yours sincerely,

W.H. McLeod

Chandigarh

Dated: 19th Aug., 1986

Dear Dr. Mcleod,

I thank you for your letter of 21st July, 1986. For obvious reasons, it is not desired to raise any controversy in private correspondence. However, I should like to record two points. Apart from the fact whether or not the criteria chosen by you are appropriate, it would have been fair to the reader to warn him that the bibliography drawn by you related to a segment of the literature on the Sikh scripture and stood hedged by the considerations explained in your letter. Secondly, as it is the books included do not all meet the criteria indicated by you, nor do many of the books excluded fail to meet the two criteria governing the selection.

I am glad that you are anxious that the Sikh literature should be adequately presented before the students. It is exactly this flaw in the bibliography that I was concerned with so as regretfully to write about it. You are aware that many of your views regarding theological, textual and historical issues as expressed in your books like 'Evolution of the Sikh Community' and 'Guru Nanak and His Religion' have been validly opposed by other scholars. I feel that students of religion are entitled to know that there are many standard works which express views entirely different from your formulation regarding the Sikh Religion and its history. For example, Dr. N. King of the California University writes in 'Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition' that your books fail to answer some of the basic questions regarding the Sikh religion. It is in this context and more so in the interest of research and scholarship that it would have been, I feel, desirable to frame a bibliography representing all points of view regarding the Sikh Scripture and Sikh literature.

I am sorry in view of my engagements it will not be possible for me to give my views on the points mentioned by you. But, as a student of the Sikh religion it will be a pleasure to meet you if you happen to visit Punjab. In case, go to Canada I hope to contact you since it is my earnest endeavour that the Sikh religion and its institutions should be faithfully presented to the students of world religions.

I presume, recent publications like 'Perspectives on Sikh Studies*' by Jagjit Singh, 'Perspective on Sikh Tradition' by Gurdev Singh and 'Sikh Ideology' by me must have come to your notice.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-
(DALJEET SINGH)

Dr. Milton Israel's in Letter of June, 5, 1990

APPENDIX-H—Memo referred

(Draft

Studies, University of Toronto, and some persons including Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann. It is clarified that the so called memo was never approved by the participants. This is quite patent from the stated objections raised by Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, Dr. Surjit Singh and S. Pritpal Singh asserting incorrect recording of the decisions made in the meeting, and their refusal to subscribe % 15,000/-, the demanded cost of the Seminar, because this evidently would have been so incongruous and anomalous for the community first to contribute so as to create a Chair, the holder of which had been attacking the Sikh ideology and the Sikh scripture, and then to bear the cost of a Seminar aimed at endorsing the views that had been considered erroneous and libellous).

Memorandum of Understanding between the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, and persons Concerned to Facilitate a Dialogue/Debate on Disputed Issues in Scholarship on Sikh Religion June 4, 1990.

This memorandum incorporates responses by the University (via its Centre for South Asian Studies) to suggestions made as recently as June 2 and 3, 1990 by concerned persons outside the University regarding refinements to the program for the proposed August 1990 dialogue/debate.

I. Background and Context

J. The proposed dialogue/debate *must address prominently and explicitly those points of criticism that have been raised in print against the work of W. H. McLeod, J. S. Grewal and H. S. Oberoi. These points include the eight propositions already presented to McLeod for response plus certain other points highlighted in the recent volume Advanced Studies in Sikhism, e. g., the use of Janamsakhis by McLeod, the views of Grewal and McLeod on the Jat influence in Sikh militancy, and the use of ethnological and anthropological evidence by Oberoi. Any other items or emphases in the programme must not be such as to significantly divert attention from addressing these much publicized points of criticism.*

2. It is expected that scholars invited by the university to participate in the dialogue/debate will come prepared to address explicitly these contended issues, though they may also address other points germane to the programme outline. They may speak and write from whatever scholarly perspectives (e.g., theological, historical, ethnological etc.) they consider appropriate.
3. The programme outlined below incorporates a number of refinements growing out of recent suggestions by concerned individuals outside the University. These are thought to make the proposed dialogue/debate more understandable and credible to a wider range of persons. Other proposed modifications have not been introduced because either : they would preclude addressing certain of the salient published criticisms ; or they would restrict effective participation to one or two, but not all, of the intellectual/academic perspectives germane to the debate/dialogue ; or they would pose a topic in such a form as to pre-judge the outcome of the dialogue/debate ; or they would simply make formulation of the topic awkward or confusing.
4. Much time and discussion involving the University and concerned individuals outside the University already have been expended. If the refined programme outline given below is not satisfactory to the concerned individuals outside the university, or to enough of them to ensure adequate funding of the dialogue/debate as proposed the university will move ahead unilaterally with whatever kind of response it deems appropriate to published criticisms of recent scholarship on Sikh history and religion by scholars associated with the University and its publications.
5. *The University* (via the Centre for South Asian Studies) reiterates the fact that there remain in the public domain a number of serious criticisms aimed at scholars who have been appointees of the University of Toronto or contributors to its publications. These criticisms have gained very wide publicity in certain academic *circles in India* (if not in international academic circles generally) and in certain community circles in *North America*. The criticisms have been made and echoed ex-parte. *Now let them be repeated and substantiated by competent scholars in the presence of those criticized. And let those criticized respond One does not publish a list of ostensibly serious criticisms only to back away from them - or substitute new issues—just when those criticized are prepared to face and answer the critics.*

If, of course, those who have gone on record as enunciating (or echoing) the state of criticisms are having second thoughts-perhaps seeing now that they initially misunderstood the thrust of the targeted scholars' work- that is a different matter. Then the proper thing for such critics to do is to withdraw their criticisms explicitly in public and in published form.

6. Some persons have been urging that we substitute, in place of -J proposed multi-disciplinary dialogue/debate (including both Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, both theologians and "secular" scholars) on the full slate of criticisms, a very different kind of event. They propose, in effect, an «in-house" discussion using only one framework of thought (Sikh theology, or ideology, as some practitioners prefer to call it), a discussion virtually confined to India-based Sikh theologians (or experts on Sikh ideology). That kind of "in house" discussion is precisely what we are trying to move beyond. We are by contrast inviting Sikh theological/ideological scholars to come out of isolation and participate freely in a multi-disciplinary dialogue/debate on the full slate of criticisms: _____

II. Programme Outline

Introductory

community

Critical scholarship in relation to religious

comparative background

sensibilities : general «*-* T ^ ^ L ^ and Sikh doctrine

Session One. Uniqueness of Sikh theology and

A. I., what ways do P * < ' c l P a — . ^ 7 " o n w h a t ways understand the uniqueness of Sikh theology and Sikh doctrine 7 and » wn do academic scholars do so ?

B. Has McLeod said that it is misleading to call Guru Nanak the founder of Sikh religion ? Has McLeod said that what Nanak clearest... expression of..... the so .

Sant tradition t (Position , * £ * ^ ^ T a i this ? Is he right or wrong ? What are xne iu*_y issue for Sikh faith ? r««wi« • an

Session Two Basic Sikh ethics and injunctions of the Gurus .

evolving or received tradition ?

and

A What is distinctive of, or unique what sense, if any, do Sikh ethics evolve ?

B. Has McLeod set of religious doctrines.....' and

Gurus never preached one "from the sixth Guru on- e completely given up..?'

(Proposition no. 2)*

C. Has McLeod .in that 'the traditional account about the founding of the Khalsa...cannot be acceptea . v v (Proposition no. 4)

D. McLeod said that 'the Sikh code Maryada, and Sikh symbols were evolved during the e.ghteen.h century?' (Proposition no. 5)

Session Three. The use of ethnological and anthropological evidence in regard to Sikh^v identity and its continuity.

A. Are the criticisms by G. S. Oberoi's use of such evidence valid ? How does Oberoi respond to such criticisms? H

B. Are the criticisms of McLeod and Grewal for allegedly claiming that the influx of Jats into the Panth is the main factor in Sikh militancy, and not the injunctions of the Sixth Guru, valid? How *do* McLeod and Grewal respond to such criticisms?*

C. Has McLeod said that 'though the Gurus denounced caste system and preached against it, >et they did not seem sincere or serious in removing caste differences'? (Proposition no. 6)

Session Four. Scriptural sources for the study of Sikh tradition and how to use them

A. Sikh scriptures : are they the only (or the paramount) source for the study of Sikh tradition? How to use them?

B. Has McLeod said that ^{fc}the authenticity of the current version of Guru Granth Sahib... is open to question since there are three manuscripts ..available which are not entirely identical'? (Proposition no. 8)

C. Has McLeod said that ^kthe succession of the Granth Sahib as Guru...was a subsequent adoption by the Sikhs '? (Proposition no. 7)

Concluding Remarks

At each of these points the scholars may wish to address some or all of the three corollary questions : "If so, what do(es) he/they mean?" "Is/are he/they right or wrong?" "What are the implications of this issue for Sikh faith?"

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SOME RECENT BOOKS ON SIKH STUDIES

1. Advanced Studies in Sikhism (Dr.) J. S. Mann and (Dr.) H. S. Saraon
2. Sikh Tradition Gurdev Singh
3. Sikhism Daljeet Singh
4. The Sikh Ideology Daljeet Singh
5. Essays on The Authenticity of Kartarpuri Bir Daljeet Singh
6. The Sikh Revolution Jagjit Singh
7. Perspectives on Sikh Studies Jagjit Singh
8. In the Caravan of Revolution Jagjit Singh
9. Ghadr Party Lehr (Punjabi) Jagjit Singh
10. Sikh Ethics (Dr.) Avtar Singh
11. Researches in Sikh Religion and History (Dr.) Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon