

Hew McLeod: Rejoinder

Sir: The editorial tribute (Sept. '09) says: "By his own confession, he was an agnostic; otherwise, I would have happily dubbed him a Sahajdhari Sikh!" At page 6, you have given Heading: "Hew McLeod: Missionary turned Sahajdhari". Will you kindly advise under which provision, Dr. Hew McLeod could be described as "Sahajdhari Sikh"?

GURMIT SINGH (Australia)

Sir,

If McLeod was a Sahajdhari, then Swami Daya Nand, Sudershan (RSS) and all those who distort Sikhism are Sahajdhari.

It is an injustice to Sikhism to call McLeod a sahajdhari. McLeod distorted Sikhism and was the greatest enemy of the Sikhs and Sikhism in the past 40 years.

DR. HARJINDER SINGH DILGEER

Editor's reply:

I take full responsibility for the Sep. '09 issue, including the sub-title, and - especially - for the tributes to Dr WH McLeod. The term "Missionary-turned Sahajdhari" was deliberately chosen. Doubtless, Sikhism cast a spell on McLeod who started as a 'Reverend' in Batala, Punjab, and became a 'learner'.

But exaggeration notwithstanding, Dr. McLeod must be given credit for introducing Sikhism to the Western World as a major religion, when even India's Constitution brazenly brackets it with Hinduism, along with Buddhism!

Dr. McLeod was steeped in the Sikh lore - as an academician - to the extent that he virtually gave up his own faith. We need to be generous enough to give him credit. His last book: '**Historical Dictionary of Sikhism** (Scarecrow Press, USA) alone should earn him encomiums from Sikh scholars of your distinction. Your reaction is evidently more visceral than cerebral.

Please recall that Guru Gobind Singh ji was a model of courtesy in his letter to Aurangzeb - the arch-enemy of Sikhs! We regard all as friends - none is enemy!

Typically, Dr. Dilgeer has been less than fair to Dr I.J. Singh - whom the Sikhs owe a deep debt of gratitude for extensive writings on our faith in the Western idiom. His writings bring home to readers a refreshingly modern interpretation of Sikh philosophy and history, while preserving (indeed asserting) the core.

Arguably Dr Dilgeer's diatribe is uncharacteristic of a scholar of his standing. Nothing becomes a true scholar more than humility. That is the essence of Guru Nanak's teachings. Please recognise that, at any rate, forgiveness is your best armour!

- Saran Singh

