

Hew McLeod: Revisiting the work of a controversial scholar

In the wake of the death of highly controversial Sikhism scholar Hew McLeod, Baljit S Sahi wrote a critique of his research. This is the second and concluding part of that article.

Baljit S Sahi

Scrutinising the work of Hew McLeod, Daljeet Singh wrote that "Nathism and Vaishnavism are "the elements of Sant Mat that Guru Nanak is said to have reworked and put forward. Making comparison of these two systems with Sikhism, Daljeet Singh has brought out the distinction features of Guru Nanak's teachings which are not only in conflict with the Sant Mat, but unequivocally reject them".

There is no doubt about Sikhs and their history. The Panth, Granth and Maryada, according to Man and Raminderjit, are well preserved. They said even a non-Sikh, Hari Ram Gupta, a renowned Indian historian specialized in Punjab History, gave a detailed account of the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi of the year 1699 A.D. which is based on authentic evidence that negates Hew's boisterous claim voiced without justifiable cogent material.

Furthermore, they said Ganda Singh and Professor Harbans Singh, both acclaimed Sikh scholars, wrote separately with unimpeachable evidence regarding installation of Guru Granth Sahib as Eternal Guru ending the line of human succession. And, "Jagjit Singh studied in detail the caste system which prevailed in Hindu society and ascertained that Guru Nanak and rest of the Gurus not only rejected it but also took effective steps to wean away the Sikhs and eradicate all distinctions of castes and status". "He effectively controverts Dr. McLeod's thesis about the "militarization of Sikh movement that it was the influx of Jats that led to it".

Adding to the long list of scholars who repeatedly brought out Hew's wrong doings in literature, Sangat Singh, a high ranking Indian official, in a paper presented at International Sikh conferences in 2000 opened the eyes of Sikhs, according to Hew's opponents, by publishing accounts that every Sikh must know. He exposed that "Intelligence including the powerful Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) tells us that the appointment, in post 1984 era, of Dr. S.S. Bal as Vice Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) and of Dr. J.S. Grewal, ex-Vice Chancellor of GNDU, as Director of prestigious Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, was because of RAW's recommendation. Dr. J.S. Grewal and Dr. S.S. Bal, two clean shaven members of History Department, Punjab University, Chandigarh, donned long hair, with one of them suppressing his cigarette smoking, and both of them were appointed Professors in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, and Punjab Agricultural University Ludhiana respectively while McLeod must have got his returns in other terms. A long lasting association was established between them and they kept one another in harness.

Splitting up of the Congress party, and running of the Union Government with the help of Left Front communists, made a lot of dubious scholars to don leftist/pseudo leftist mantle and occupy Chairs in Indian universities with Government patronage. Will it be far fetched to say that McLeod's position now was that of Dr. Faustus who, in dictionary terms, sold his conscience for material gains? The intelligence all over made payment in

cash, without taking receipts. Even in case where payment was made in my presence, it is difficult to prove anything: it would be a case of one affidavit against another. To say that McLeod was an independent scholar pursuing his scholasticism objectively will be a travesty of truth".

Sangat Singh further enumerated that "McLeod has excelled himself in inventing, fabricating, mutilating, falsifying, distorting and tampering with facts.....He is lucky, for there is no Ayatollah Khomeini among the Sikhs. His caricature and demeaning references to Sikh Gurus and Sikh scriptures are in no way less blasphemous than what Salman Rushdie in Satanic Verses did to the Prophet, his Wives, and the holy Koran".

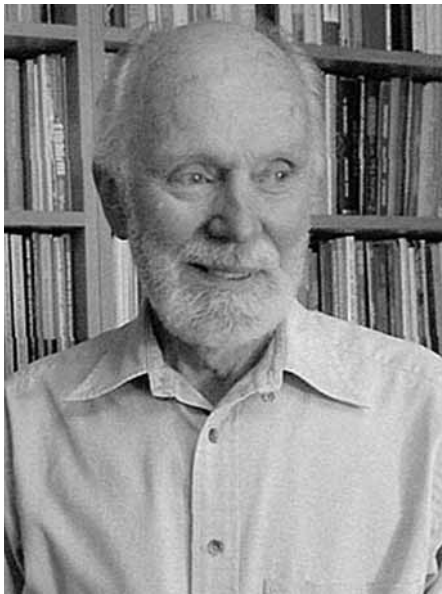
Licensed as Rev. William Hewat McLeod on December

12, 1957, he was appointed to succeed Ryburn in India in 1957. Having acquired special training in printing and accounting, he was predestined to perform overseas missionary work and sailed to India on April 4, 1958 as "Own Worker, Bible class movement". In India he became manager of the Mashal Press and according to Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand "engaged in special research on Sikhism" and left for London in July of 1963 only to return to India in 1965. In 1998, contrary to the belief of his friends that Hew was agnostic, he became a convener of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa and since 2000 remained a member of its historical records reference group. His last rights were carried out on July 24, 2009 at the Chappell of Knox College of Duniden, New Zealand.

Hew's most trusted flag bearers: Gurinder Singh Mann and Pashaura Singh highlighted his literary contributions to the Sikh studies in various articles on the net. Pashaura's response to Hew's untimely demise was rather painstaking "Alas! Alas! Alas!" He wrote "I was shocked to hear the news of the sad demise of my mentor and a world-

renowned scholar of Sikh Studies, Professor W.H. McLeod. About two weeks ago, he fell and broke his collar-bone. He was in the intensive care unit after a surgery in the hospital".

Indeed it is unfortunate; Sikhs have lost a Christian missionary, turned atheist, so intently immersed in Sikh studies. Hew leaves behind a trail of deception and intrigue that Sikhs will, now, never be able to objectively address. Regrettably his demise brings out the few wavered crawling out of the woodwork. The Sikhs condole his passing because neither the family nor the departed soul realizes what he has done. May the Wahe Guru give strength to Hew's friends in academia to endure his impertinent path so decadently carved for them.



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