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Dining Alone in Rawalpindi? Max Arthur Macauliffe: Sikh Scholar, Reformer, and Evangelist

ABSTRACT: Max Arthur Macauliffe, originally Michael McAuliffe (1838-1913), Indian Civil Servant, judge, and Sikh scholar, was born in Glenmore, Monagea, Co. Limerick, Ireland. He graduated from Queen's College Galway in 1860 and began his colonial career in India in 1864. He became Assistant Commissioner and Judicial Assistant in the Punjab, then Deputy Commissioner, and finally a Divisional Judge. Born a Catholic, when he lived in Amritsar Macauliffe became deeply interested in the Sikh religion. He learned the languages of the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*, and did the classic translation of major parts of it into English. In 1909 the Clarendon Press published his celebrated work, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors,* in six volumes. He saw his translation as pioneering in that he collaborated closely with indigenous Sikh scholars and he committed to writing what had previously been orally communicated. Macauliffe was an erastian in his belief that the Sikh religion should be subject to the state which, in turn, had a duty to support it. In his unceasing quest for official sponsorship, he emphasised the advantages of Sikhism to the state but he was bitterly disappointed in his failure. He began his masterpiece in missionary mode: 'I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion', and he had a central role in propagating the Tat Khalsa interpretation of Sikhism in the west. He had serious difficulties in his professional career and major scandals in his personal life. However, Macauliffe died a wealthy man.

KEYWORDS: Macauliffe, Sikhs, *Adi Granth*, Colonial, Tat Khalsa, Singh Sabha, Amritsar, Ireland, Kahn Singh Nabha.

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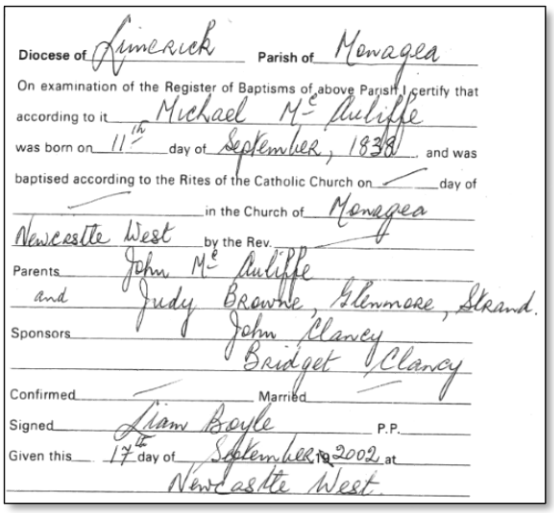
The name of Max Arthur Macauliffe is known not only to scholars of Sikh studies but to virtually all Sikhs who are well informed about their religion. He was, and remains, one of the best-known figures in Sikh scholarship worldwide. He was a reformer of Sikhism and he has done the classic translation into English of major parts of the *Granth*, the holy book of the Sikhs. In 1909 Oxford University Press published his celebrated masterpiece, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors,* in six volumes and running to almost 2,500 pages. It has, it appears, never been out of print (Lal 1999, 129). Darshan Singh, in his *Western Image of the Sikh Religion,* an anthology of twenty articles on Sikhism by western writers from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, reprinted no fewer than seven of Macauliffe's essays (Singh 1999). In Tony Ballantyne's opinion Macauliffe was the 'most important western interpreter of Sikhism before W.H. McLeod' (Ballantyne 2002b, 24). Yet this man has been totally unknown in his native country of Ireland and he does not merit an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* However, there is an entry on him in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Foley 2009). It is no great wonder that McLeod was surprised by the 'paucity of scholarly studies of Macauliffe's contribution' (McLeod 1996, 6).

Personal

There are a number of misconceptions in circulation about Macauliffe. The first has to do with his name. Nobody seems to have noticed that his original 'Christian' name was neither 'Max' nor 'Arthur' but 'Michael', or that the original form of his surname was 'McAuliffe'. It is likely that he called himself 'Max' in honour of the celebrated Orientalist, Friedrich Max Müller, for he hoped to do for the Sikh religion in the west what Müller had done for Hinduism. However, Macauliffe's change of name may well be connected with a number of scandals in which he was involved and the many difficulties he experienced in his work in India. His official name remained 'Michael' until as late as 1909. For instance, his Memorial to the Marquis of Ripon, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, is dated 26 January 1882 and is from 'Michael' Macauliffe of the Bengal Civil Service (Government of India 1882, 1). A letter from Macauliffe, dated 17 December 1909, and addressed to The Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, has the following postscript: 'I sign myself as I have done for many years in private letters. I have made a statutory declaration of the change of Christian names and request that it may be adopted in the Government records'. On 25 January 1910, R. Ritchie of the India Office replied to Macauliffe as follows: 'The change in your Christian name notified by you has been recorded in the books of this office' (Government of India 1910, 5, 9). Indeed, Macauliffe's name on his will, which was executed on 17 October 1912, with probate

granted on 16 December 1914, was altered by Registrar's Order on 22 March 1915 to read 'Max Arthur (otherwise Michael) Macauliffe'.

Though Macauliffe is very frequently described as English, and indeed often so described himself—even McLeod, as recently as the year 2000, described him as English (McLeod 2000, 95)—he was, in fact, Irish. In an impressive show of unanimity, all commentators on Macauliffe are mistaken about his date of birth. He was born on 11 September 1838 in Glenmore, Monagea, near Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, the eldest of five sons and seven daughters of John McAuliffe, schoolteacher and farmer, and Julia (née Browne) McAuliffe, schoolteacher, of Glenmore. Professor Harbans Lal, like some others, claimed that Macauliffe was '[b]orn into Protestant Christianity in predominantly Catholic Ireland' (Lal 1999, 131), a conclusion probably deduced, not unreasonably, from Macauliffe's writings. However, he was baptised according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church in the parish of Monagea and in the admissions register of Queen's College Galway his religion is given as 'Roman Catholic'. He was educated locally in Monagea and Templeglantine and received his intermediate education at Springfield College, Ennis, Co. Clare, now St Flannan's College. He was admitted to Queen's College Galway in 1857. He was granted scholarships in all of his three undergraduate years and, subsequently, senior scholarships in Ancient Classics in 1860-61 and in Modern Languages and Modern History in 1861-62. In 1860 he was awarded the BA degree, with first-class honours in Modern Languages, winning the gold medal. He received an honorary MA on the dissolution of the Queen's University in Ireland in 1882. Macauliffe took the examination for the Indian Civil Service in London in June 1862. He was posted initially, not to the Punjab, but to Bengal, arriving in India on 9 February 1864. He served in the Punjab as Assistant Commissioner and Judicial Assistant, becoming a Deputy Commissioner in December 1882 and a Divisional Judge in November 1884, retiring in 1893, and moving to London in 1904.


Diocese of Limerick Parish of Monagea
On examination of the Register of Baptisms of above Parish I certify that
according to it Michael Mc Auliffe
was born on 11th day of September, 1838 and was
baptised according to the Rites of the Catholic Church on / day of
in the Church of Monagea
Newcastle West by the Rev.
Parents John Mc Auliffe
and Judy Browne, Glenmore, Strand.
Sponsors John Clancy
Bridget Clancy
Confirmed / Married
Signed Liam Boyle P.P.
Given this 17th day of September 2002 at
Newcastle West.

Official copy of Macauliffe's birth certificate from the Register of Baptisms, Parish of Monagea.

Stereotypes of India

In nineteenth-century western views of India the words 'torpor', 'sleep', and 'slumber' recur frequently. To give just one example, the distinguished Irish political economist John Elliot Cairnes asked why had India and China:

> remained for 3,000 years in a state of intellectual and social torpor—engaging, indeed, in the pursuits of industry and trade, but—except so far as India has fallen under English influence—making no progress, showing no improvement, while Great Britain, in the short period of half a century, has more than doubled her population and more than quadrupled her wealth? (Cairnes 2003, 387).

Sir Henry Maine 'depicted India as a stagnant and timeless society, an enduring trope of western representations of India, and communicated this vision to thousands of young men entering the ICS [Indian Civil Service]' (Ballantyne 2002a, 52). Colonial discourse usually both infantilizes and feminizes indigenous peoples. Robert Needham Cust, formerly a judicial commissioner in the Punjab, said that all religions had common features and that the 'ancient simplicity of the Vedas' should be admired by 'every true heart' as they expressed 'the childhood of our race and religion'. According to Ballantyne, 'Cust's theory of religious development, like Max Müller's, was simultaneously developmental and degenerationist' (Ballantyne 2002a, 104). Müller believed that 'Europeans had continued to build upon the high achievements of their Aryan ancestors, while Indian culture had become stagnant, even degenerate', but that Hinduism could be reformed. According to Ballantyne, Müller's 'personal mission' was 'to revivify and purify Hinduism' to counteract 'popular' Hinduism and the 'pernicious effects of Muslim authority' (Ballantyne 2002a, 43).

The celebrated 'Battle of the Orientalists and the Anglicists' in the 1820s and 1830s, over the type of education and the language of instruction to be supported in Indian colleges, was essentially one about *strategy*, about how best to govern the conquered territory of India; the Orientalists seeking, in a well-known phrase, 'to govern India according to Indian ideas'. The most celebrated Anglicist, Lord Macaulay, in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education' of 1835, lambasted Indian culture, claiming that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. In the 'Minute', he famously explained how to civilise the Indians: 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect' (Macaulay 1871, 91, 102). About the year 1854 Macaulay invited Max Müller to discuss the content of the examinations for the Indian Civil Service with him. Müller tells us that he came armed with facts and arguments supporting Oriental studies and Macaulay, professing to know 'nothing of Indian languages and literatures', asked him a number of questions. But before he could answer even one of them, Macaulay began relating the history of his 'Minute on Indian Education' and for nearly an hour Müller tried to get a word in. Then Macaulay thanked him 'for the useful information I had given him, and I went back to Oxford a sadder and I hope a wiser man' (Müller 1898, 185, 186).

Modernity of Sikhism

When Macauliffe lived in Amritsar (at 2 Cantonment Road), the city in which the Hari Mandir [Harmandir Sahib or Golden Temple of the Sikhs] is situated, he soon became deeply interested in the Sikh religion. He accepted the torpor theory, seeing the weight of Hindu tradition as the enemy of progress in India. He concludes his essay, *How the Sikhs Became a Militant People*, with these words regarding the Sikh Gurus:

> In them the East shook off the torpor of ages, and unburdened itself of the heavy weight of ultra-conservatism which has paralysed the genius and intelligence of its people. Only those who know India by actual experience, can adequately appreciate the difficulties the Gurus encountered in their efforts to reform and awaken the sleeping nation (Macauliffe 1905, 378; reproduced almost word-for-word in *The Sikh Religion,* Macauliffe 1909, I, lxxxvii-iii).

It should be noted that while Matthew Arnold was delivering his influential lectures on Celtic literature at Oxford which popularised the gender-based distinction between masculine, rational Saxons and sensitive, feminine Celts, his colleague at Oxford, Max Müller, was deploying a related set of categories with reference to India. The distinction between the Aryan north and Dravidian (and sometimes also the Turanian) south became a 'driving force in British interpretations of Indian history', the Aryans being '(originally at least) tall, light complexioned, meat-eating and vigorous monotheists while the Dravidians and Turanians tended to be short, dark, vegetarian polytheists prone to idolatry and indolence' (Ballantyne 2002a, 50). The Punjab, situated in the north, was the first home of the Aryans in India, and in the case of the Sikhs, Macauliffe was anxious to emphasise their vigorous masculinity, indeed their military prowess and the corresponding muscularity of their religion; they were physically and spiritually worthy of being collaborators with the British in ruling India. Under the early Gurus, he writes, the Sikh religion was 'a system of quietism' (Macauliffe 1898, 310), but the 'meekness and passive submission of the religion of Nanak were changed under Har Gobind into independence and heroic activity' (Macauliffe 1881, 253). Guru Har Gobind was the first who gave 'a martial direction to the religion'. It was, however, 'in the person of Guru Gobind Singh that the Sikh religion acquired its highest martial character—a character which is still impressed on it, and which has rendered the Sikhs some of the finest soldiers of the East' (Macauliffe 1898, 310).

For Macauliffe, the supposed modernity of the Sikhs and the pristine purity of their religion made them ideal subjects of empire. The Gurus, he informs us, 'most powerfully and successfully attacked the caste system and the Hindu belief in impurity and defilement in many necessary and harmless acts of domestic life'. Such a system of belief, which also condemned *suttee* or *sati,* which he calls the 'concremation of widows', preached the equality of women, and the dangers of clericalism in religion, was clearly in tune with modernity. According to Macauliffe, the 'freedom of women and their

emancipation from the tyranny of the parda [purdah] may be inferred from the manner in which Bhai Budha received Mata Ganga the wife of Guru Arjan, from Guru Amar Das's refusal to receive a rani who had visited him when she was closely veiled, and from Kabir's address to his daughter-in-law' (Macauliffe 1909, xxii). According to Macauliffe, the doctrine of the Gurus was to be taught to all castes and classes, whereas a Brahman had urged, 'That religious instruction ought not to be communicated to every one, it being forbidden to instruct Sudars and women in the sacred lore' (Macauliffe 1909, 1, l).

Sikhism: The Anglicanism of the Orient?

In Macauliffe's view, in the Middle Ages there was 'a wonderful analogy between the spiritual condition of Europe and Asia' and a religious 'reformation' also took place in the east:

> In Europe and Asia all learning was in the hands of the priesthood, and this admittedly led to serious abuses in both continents. But when things are at their worst they often mend. During the very period that Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin in Europe were warning men of the errors that had crept into Christianity, men like Kabir and Guru Nanak were denouncing priestcraft and idolatry in India, and with very considerable success. Most of the medieval saints who led the crusade against superstition founded sects which still survive, but the most numerous [and] powerful of all is the great Sikh sect founded by Baba Nanak (Macauliffe 1898, 287 and repeated, in substance, in Macauliffe 1903, 331).

Macauliffe says Sikhism emphasises inner individual formation before outward rituals, structures, professions of faith. He quotes John Milton's statement that God 'prefers before all temples the upright heart and pure' (Macauliffe 1898, 289). In contrast, he speaks of the Scribes and Pharisees as upholders of ceremonial tradition, with the Scribes as professional interpreters of the law after the return from the Babylonian Captivity. The Pharisees were strict in doctrine and ritual, but lacked the spirit of piety, laying stress on the outward show of religion and morality, and assuming superiority over others on that account, and so were seen as hypocritical, formal, and self-righteous. It was the belief in 'impurity and defilement which made the Scribes and Pharisees of old a sect apart, and which still socially separates the Hindus from the members of all other religious denominations' (Macauliffe 1903, 337). In St Mark's gospel, as Macauliffe recounts, when the Scribes and Pharisees saw some disciples eating bread without previously washing their hands, they complained. But Christ answered, 'There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man' (Mark 7:15). Macauliffe's conception of the Sikh religion seems to be essentially non-sacramental and distrustful of mediation in favour of a direct and unmediated

encounter between God and humankind. Any form of intervention is perpetually in danger of becoming prevention, disabling rather than enabling this encounter, where images become idols, and stocks and stones become themselves the object of adoration, the strange gods who become the recipients of idolatrous worship. In this context Macauliffe (1898, 297) quotes Nanak on the Siren-like allures of sensuous beauty and earthly pleasures:

> Were a mansion of pearls erected and inlaid with gems for me,
> Perfumed with musk, saffron, fragrant aloe, and sandal, so as to confer delight.
> May it not be that on beholding it I should forget Thee, and not remember Thy name!
> My soul burneth without God.
> I have ascertained from my Guru that there is no other shelter *than thou, O God.*
> Were the earth to be studded with diamonds and rubies, and my couch to be similarly adorned.
> Were fascinating *damsels*, whose faces *shine with* jewels, to shed lustre and diffuse pleasure,
> May it not be that on beholding them I should forget Thee, and not remember Thy name.

Sikhs 'rejected the idolatry and superstitions of the Hindus, taught that God was one alone' (Macauliffe 1898, 294). They also rejected the excessive ritualism of the Hindus, on the one hand, and their excessive penances and austerities, on the other: 'Contrary to the practice of the ancient Indian ascetics, the Gurus held that man might obtain eternal happiness without forsaking his ordinary duties' (Macauliffe 1909, I, lxiv). According to Macauliffe, in Buddhism, 'those who attained the noble path which led to emancipation were avowedly the monastic orders'. But:

> Nanak, on the other hand, deeply sensible of the extravagance of some of the religious orders of his time, encouraged the secularization of religion. He taught that a man who married, attended to his secular avocations, and neglected not at the same time the duties of his religion, was as surely pursuing the noble path as the cenobite and the anchorite (Macauliffe 1880, 237).

Macauliffe further claims that the greatest religious reforms 'have been effected by the laity. The clergy, apart from their vested interests, are too wedded to ancient systems, and dare not impugn their utility or authority' (Macauliffe 1909, I, liv).

Sikhism and Hinduism

For Macauliffe, Sikhism had become degenerate, having been contaminated by Hinduism, and was in need of reformation. He wrote in 1881 that 'Notwithstanding the exertions of the gurus, the Sikhs of the Punjab have now

completely relapsed into idolatry, and, ... their worship in all respects resembles that of the Hindus' (Macauliffe 1881, 277). But:

> The Hindu corruptions of the religion of Nanak and Gobind are now bitterly deplored by all educated and intelligent Sikhs. But as it has been found that amid the universal corruption of the Christian church in the middle ages, the Albigeois, a small sect of hardy and intelligent mountaineers, preserved the pristine purity of their faith amid their Alpine fastnesses, so amid the general corruption of the religion of Gobind there are to be found about one hundred Sikhs at Naderh in the Dakhan, who are said to have up to the present time preserved intact the faith and ceremonies of Guru Gobind (Macauliffe 1881, 277).

And this Janus-like reformation at once looked back to a pure, unsullied past and forward towards modernity, to a religion cleansed of both superstition and accretion. In effect, the general prescription was that India should, in a brisk formulation, wake up, grow up, and become a man – and the Sikhs were the Indians who most closely approached this ideal. In the 1870s many Sikhs would have agreed with Ernest Trumpp on the connection between Sikhism and Hinduism (Barrier 1978, 172-173). Though he came to see Sikhism as a totally independent religion, Macauliffe writes that 'practically it may be considered as a reformation of Hinduism' (Macauliffe 1898, 286), while Sikhism itself now stood in need of reform. He emphasises the originality of Sikhism, 'a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences' (Macauliffe 1909, I, liv).

In a passage which is repeated in his writings, Macauliffe gives a succinct doctrinal account of Sikhism:

> To sum up some of the moral and political merits of the Sikh religion: It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows [*sati, suttee*], the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country (Macauliffe 1909, I, xxiii).

This summary is taken, virtually word-for-word, from an earlier work, 'The Sikh Religion' (Macauliffe 1903, 353). However, there is a significant difference: the concluding phrase, 'and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest *citizens of any country*', reads in the earlier text, 'and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest *Christians*' [emphases added]. In an image which recurs in his work, Macauliffe explains the relationship between Hinduism and Sikhism as equivalent to that between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Hinduism was:

> like the boa-constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior .... Hinduism

> has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction and assimilation in the body of the huge and resistless leviathan is inevitable. Notwithstanding the Sikh Guru's virulent denunciation of Brahmins, secular Sikhs, as we have seen, now rarely do anything without their assistance. Brahmins help them to be born, help them to wed, help them to die, and help their souls after death to obtain a state of bliss. And Brahmins, with all the deftness of Roman Catholic missionaries in Protestant countries, have partially succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to restore to their niches the images of Devi, the Queen of Heaven, and of the saints and gods of the ancient faith (Macauliffe 1881, 283).

This passage is reproduced, nearly verbatim, in *The Sikh Religion*, except the words 'and assimilation in the body of the huge and resistless leviathan is inevitable' are replaced by 'is, it is apprehended inevitable without State support' (Macauliffe 1909, I, lvii). However, William Crooke, in his review of *The Sikh Religion*, castigated Macauliffe because he had not 'utilised the stories of new material on the monotheistical developments of later Hinduism which have been collected by Dr. Grierson' (Crooke 1910, 414).

Sikhism and the State

Central to Macauliffe's conception of Sikhism is its relationship to the state, the critical correlative of his erastianism being the duty of the state to support that religion. In its obituary for Macauliffe, *The Times* took up this theme: 'The Sikhs are the most martial of the subject races of our Indian Empire; and their particular form of religion is now being menaced by the advances of Hinduism' (17 March 1913). Macauliffe frequently descants on the 'advantages of the Sikh religion to the State' (Macauliffe 1909, I, xviii), and this was one of the purposes served by his translation:

> it is admitted that a knowledge of the religions of the people of India is a desideratum for the British officials who administer its affairs, and indirectly for the people who are governed by them; and it is no doubt with that object the India Office employed Dr. Trumpp to make a translation of Adi Granth (Macauliffe 1898, 319).

These sentiments are reproduced in his Preface to *The Sikh Religion* (Macauliffe 1909, I, xxii). Trumpp's translation had been commissioned by the Secretary of State for India but not so Macauliffe's. In his 1903 *Lecture on the Sikh Religion and Its Advantages to the State,* Macauliffe deals specifically with the politics of Sikhism. According to Barrier:

> Sikh loyalty to the *raj* had been mentioned briefly in other essays, but the lecture especially underscored this dimension of recent Sikh experience. A 'bulwark of British power in the land,' the Sikhs would continue to remain friendly allies. The only danger, said Macauliffe, was the erosion of Sikh power through inadequate education and a

> decline in population. The British consequently should take immediate steps to provide the Sikhs with more patronage. Implicit throughout the lecture was a message that such support also should be extended to Macauliffe (Barrier 1978, 179).

Macauliffe emphasises the political advantages of official support for his grand project:

> It seems to me political to place before the soldiery their Guru's prophecies in favour of the English, and the texts of their sacred writings which foster loyalty ... I need not dilate on the value of the Sikh soldiers now and ever since the annexation of the Punjab, or on the political danger of withholding from them the reparation which it cannot be doubted is due for the misrepresentations of their sacred volume in the only official translation that has ever been made (Barrier, 1978, 181, quoting documents in Home-Books, June 1907, 121-2A).

He claims that words of the ninth Guru inspired the Sikhs in their assault on Delhi in 1857:

> One day, as Guru Teg Bahadur was in the top story of his prison, the Emperor Aurangzeb thought he saw him looking towards the south in the direction of the Imperial zenana.[1] He was sent for the next day, and charged with this grave breach of Oriental etiquette and propriety. The Guru replied, 'Emperor Aurangzeb, I was on the top story of my prison, but I was not looking at thy private apartments or at thy queens. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy pardas and destroy thine empire'. Sikh writers state that these words became the battle-cry of the Sikhs in the assault on the mutineers in Digli (Delhi) in 1857, under General John Nicholson, and that thus the prophecy of the ninth Guru was gloriously fulfilled (Macauliffe 1909, I, xviii).

In his 'Life of Guru Gobind Singh', Macauliffe reports that one day the conversation between the Guru and his disciples turned to the coming of the English to India and his disciples asked him what the condition of the Sikhs would be when the English arrived. The Guru replied as follows:

> The English shall come with a great army. The Sikhs too shall be very powerful, and their army shall engage that of the English. Sometimes victory shall incline to my Sikhs, sometimes to the English. As long as the religion of the Sikhs remaineth distinct, so long shall the glory of those who profess it increase …

But when morals and religious practices of the Sikhs degenerate, and they 'allow their states to be governed by evil influences, then shall the English rule and their glory increase' (Macauliffe 1909, V, 107). According to Guru

[1] Women's purdah quarters.

Gobind Singh, the English would come and be joined by the Khalsa, to rule in the east as well as in the west:

> The combined armies of the English and the Sikhs shall be very powerful, as long as they rule with united councils. The empire of the British shall vastly increase, and they shall in every way obtain prosperity. Wherever they take their armies they shall conquer and bestow thrones on their vassals. Then in every house shall be wealth, in every house religion, in every house learning, and in every house happiness (Macauliffe 1909, I, xix).

This is repeated from 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant People', but instead of 'in every house happiness', the earlier text had 'in every house a woman' (Macauliffe 1905, 372). In the actual text of the 'Life of Guru Gobind Singh' in *The Sikh Religion* (rather than the quotation in Macauliffe's Preface), this passage contains some changes, for example, 'the empire of the English', instead of 'the British'; instead of 'vassals', we get 'those who assist them'; and we also get 'rejoicing' in every house, as well as 'happiness' and 'in every house a woman', to which Macauliffe adds the following footnote:

> Under Muhammadan rule the Muhammadans used often to deprive the Hindus of their wives and daughters. In many cases, too, the subjects were too poor to purchase wives for themselves. The Guru possibly also meant that his Sikhs should embrace domestic lives, and cease to demean themselves by religious mendicancy (Macauliffe 1909, V, 157).

In Macauliffe's view, 'It is such prophecies as these, combined with the monotheism, the absence of superstition and restraint in the matter of food, which have made the Sikhs among the bravest, the most loyal and devoted subjects of the British Crown' (Macauliffe 1909, I, xix). He recounts that a Sikh had written: 'There is one trait very peculiar in them such as must make the enemies of the British fear them. The true blood of loyalty and devotion to their master surges in their veins. A true Sikh will let his body be cut to pieces when fighting for his master' (Macauliffe 1909, I, xix).

It was, Macauliffe tells us, to the five hundred Pathans who went over to his enemy, Bhim Chand, the Raja of Kahlur, that Guru Gobind Singh addressed his 'memorable speech, which now, after many vicissitudes of fortune, inspires the Khalsa with heroic resolution and devotion to the British Government' (Macauliffe 1905, 369). The Sikh memorial to Lord Curzon at Lahore to sponsor a 'correct' translation of the *Granth*, and Curzon's reply were, apparently, circulated to the Sikh army in India, 'with the object of causing dissatisfaction with the Indian Government. This affords an illustration of the manner in which that great Imperial body fails to win the loyalty of the natives of India' (Macauliffe 1910, 384).

Macauliffe is an erastian in his belief that religion should be subject to the state. It would again, he wrote, 'stain the annals of the human race and retard civilization, if priests and religious teachers were not kept in proper

subordination to civil authority' (Macauliffe 1881, 271). According to Macauliffe, some religions 'make for loyalty and others for what we may call independence. Some religions appear to require State support, while others have sufficient vitality to dispense with it' (Macauliffe 1909, I, lv). Buddhism, he argued, 'without State support completely lost its hold in India, so it is apprehended that without State support Sikhism will also be lost in the great chaos of Indian religious systems' (Macauliffe 1909, I, lvi). Sikhism was still a 'comparatively young religion' and was making a 'vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without State support' (Macauliffe 1909, I, lvii). Here, we might say he is using John Stuart Mill's 'infant industry' argument, seeking state protection for his 'young' religion, and clearly appealing to an Athenian rather than a Spartan theory of child-rearing.

Macauliffe, a severe critic of the state policy of 'religious neutrality', claimed that

> In our time one of the principal agencies for the preservation of the Sikh religion has been the practice of military officers commanding Sikh regiments to send Sikh recruits to receive baptism according to the rites prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, and endeavour to preserve them in their subsequent career from the contagion of idolatry. The military thus ignoring or despising the restraints imposed by the civil policy of what is called 'religious neutrality', have practically become the main hierophants and guardians of the Sikh religion (Macauliffe 1909, I, xxv).

Macauliffe 'deeply regretted what he called "the abolition of Sikhism as the State religion in Kapurthala" when its ruler apostatized by renouncing the Sikh form' (Singh 1970, 144).

Translation

Between 1875 and 1881 Macauliffe published four articles on Sikhism in the *Calcutta Review* and he had begun to learn the languages of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The partial translation of the *Granth* into English by the German missionary, Dr Ernest Trumpp, appeared in 1877, but was, in Macauliffe's estimation, 'highly inaccurate and unidiomatic, and furthermore gave mortal offence to the Sikhs by the *odium theologicum* introduced into it. Whenever he saw an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs, he eagerly availed himself of it'. So Macauliffe undertook a new translation 'to endeavour to make some reparation' to the Sikhs for these insults (Macauliffe 1909, I, vii). In a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, dated 17 December 1909, Macauliffe wrote, 'At the request of representative Sikh societies, I resigned the Indian Civil Service in 1893 to make a correct translation of their sacred writings, and thus to make reparation to them for the insults to their faith contained in the Christian missionary's volume'. He continued:

> The making of reparation to the Sikhs is apart altogether from the utility to the Indian Government of the Sikh religion, which I endeavoured to explain in my Simla lectures, forwarded to you with my letter of February 5, 1907. The Government may, or may not regard my work, as several scholars have done, as a permanent contribution to the world's literature and especially to the science of comparative theology (Government of India 1910, 5, 6).

This letter is part of an intense and sustained campaign by Macauliffe to obtain official funding for his translation.

Macauliffe had finished his manuscript by 1908, but the British government 'refused to sponsor the publication or to associate openly with the written material' (Barrier 1978, 179). The previous year, he had frequently petitioned the government with requests for support, usually on the basis of the political importance of his work. Even as late as 17 December 1909, when the book was already published, he wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Government of the Punjab as follows:

> During the past sixteen years I have spent the whole of my time and I estimate about two lakhs of rupees in completing my work on the Sikh religion. The Sikhs themselves who have not been affected by the seditious spirit which has been recently extending throughout India recognise it as being thoroughly representative of their sacred Scriptures and fitted to hold an important place in the political, military and literary life of India (Government of India 1910, 6).

The translation of the *Granth* into vernacular languages and in an accessible style was, for Macauliffe, a part of the project of modernity. 'The great Pandits and Brahmans of Hinduism', he wrote, 'communicated their instructions in Sanskrit, which they deemed the language of the gods. The Gurus thought it would be of more general advantage to present their messages in the dialects of their age (Macauliffe 1909, I, l). There could be no doubt, he claimed, 'that, were the Gurus and Bhagats now alive, they would be pleased to see their compositions translated into a language like the English spoken by many peoples throughout the continents and islands which extend far and wide over the earth' (Macauliffe 1909, I, ix). There was a time, he informs us, 'when it was not allowed to print the sacred book of the Sikhs'; then it was 'printed in parts which it was forbidden to unite in one volume'. But modernity had taken over 'and now the book is openly exposed for sale' (Macauliffe 1909, I, viii). Gone too was the prejudice of Sikhs of the old school against translation:

> The exposition of the Sikh scriptural texts had come down by word of mouth through hereditary *gianis* (professional interpreters) or traditional denominations such as Udasis and Nirmalas. No published exegetical works were till then available. The orthodox Sikhs felt that the interpretation of the holy writ had better remain on the lips of the believers and were reluctant to deliver up the texts to writers to try their hand at fathoming their meaning and thus take liberties with the Guru's word (Singh 1970, 140).

Historically, in Harbans Singh's opinion, Macauliffe's translation 'is very important: it, for the first time, recorded the interpretation of the sacred texts, as orally communicated by *gianis* from generation to generation. It, thus, preserves a valuable tradition and has become a key to the understanding of the Sikh Scriptures' (Singh 1970, 144). Unlike most great theological systems, 'the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved, and we know at first hand what they taught' (Macauliffe 1909, I, liii). But the very authenticity of the sacred books could militate against the general or permanent acceptance of the religion:

> The teachings of which there is no authentic record, are elastic and capable of alteration and modification to suit foreign countries and the aspirations and intellectual conditions of ages long subsequent to those in which they arose. No religion in its entirety is permanently adopted by a foreign country; and no religion when it spontaneously migrates can escape the assimilation of local ideas or superstitions. The followers of all religions are prone to indulge in the luxury of eclecticism. By a universal law they adhere to the dogmas most suitable for themselves, and reject what they deem the least important or the least practicable enjoined by the founders of their faiths (Macauliffe 1909, I, liii).

Macauliffe's translation was prepared on what he believed to be 'entirely a novel plan':

> Most translators, when they have completed their renderings, proceed to publish without subjecting their work to native criticism. On this account there are few, if any, translations of Oriental works made in Europe, even by the most eminent scholars, which are accepted by the learned natives of the East. I resolved that mine should be an exception, and accordingly submitted every line of my work to the most searching criticism of learned Sikhs (Macauliffe 1909, I, ix).

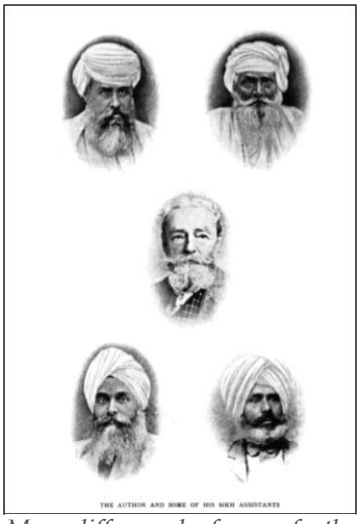
Macauliffe asked Maharaja Sir Hira Singh of Nabha for the services of Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha, the royal tutor and 'the most lettered Sikh of his day', and he maintained an active liaison with 'all the leading exegetes of the sacred writ', as well as keeping a few *gyanis* (professional interpreters of the Sikh scriptures) in his regular employment. 'His house in Amritsar—2, Cantonment Road—was like a school of divinity where theological discussion and literary and linguistic hair-splitting went on endlessly' (Singh 1970, 141). In the Preface to *The Sikh Religion*, Macauliffe pays handsome tribute to Singh:

> For literary assistance I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Sardar Kahn Singh of Nabha, one of the greatest scholars and most distinguished authors among the Sikhs, who by order of the Raja of Nabha accompanied me to Europe to assist in the publication of this work and in reading the proofs thereof (Macauliffe 1909, I, xxix-xxx).

The Singh Sabha of Amritsar presented an address to Macauliffe who reproduces a translation in his Preface. It states that after Trumpp's 'generally incorrect' translation, which was also 'injurious to our religion', there was:

> a great want felt for an accurate version when Akal Purukh (the Immortal God) induced you to undertake it and fulfil our desires. It would have been well, had we executed the translation ourselves; but Akal Purukh granted you the credit of the performance. As the holy Guru Teg Bahadur foretold that men would come from beyond the seas to assist the Sikhs, so you have been rendering us mental and bodily assistance (Macauliffe 1909, I, xiii).

As Professor Nikky Singh discusses in more detail in her contribution to this special issue, Macauliffe was faced with many linguistic problems in translating the sacred writings of the Sikhs. He wrote that the texts were written in several languages and local dialects and that there were no suitable dictionaries available to him when he began his translation. There were a few *gyanis* surviving, but few or none of these were able to translate into English and none had all the languages of the *Granth*. Nevertheless, Macauliffe worked in close collaboration with Sikh scholars, sending them every line of his translations and revising his drafts in response to their recommendations. This, he believed, was an entirely novel plan, for not even the most eminent Oriental scholars in the west submitted their translations to native scrutiny nor were their works accepted by native scholars. Clearly Macauliffe had in mind here the most celebrated of all western scholars of the orient, Max Müller.



Macauliffe and four of the Gyanis who collaborated in his translation. Bhai Kahn Singh is bottom left. (Frontispiece of The Sikh Religion.)

When his great work *The Sikh Religion* was completed, Macauliffe asked that it be scrutinised by a committee of Sikh scriptural scholars who suggested various emendations and gave it their seal of approval, both linguistic and theological. As well as translating many passages from the *Granth*, he decided to include biographies of the ten Gurus of Sikhism and of the *Bhagats*, the Sant poets whose works also appear in the *Granth*. It was the first published exegetical work on the Sikh scriptures, as previous expositions of this kind had come down only by word of mouth through, for instance, hereditary *gyanis*. Using these methods, Macauliffe published on Sikhism for almost forty years and he spoke before gatherings of scholars in India, Italy, France, and England. When he had completed his work he moved to England, accompanied by Bhai Kahn Singh, who assisted him in seeing the proofs of his book through the press.

Contemporary Sikh Reaction

Though the work was enthusiastically received by Sikhs, wealthy adherents of the religion, fearing government displeasure, failed to support it financially. On one occasion Macauliffe wrote of himself as alienated both from unreformed Sikhs and from his British colonial colleagues and, as a consequence, he once found himself dining alone in Rawalpindi. According to Harbans Singh, the Punjab Government had recommended patronage to the sum of Rs 15,000, but the Secretary of State, Lord Morley, reduced this to Rs 5,000. As a result:

> Macauliffe felt slighted and declined the paltry sum. Sir Mackworth Young had opposed the grant on grounds of religious neutrality, which drew from Macauliffe the caustic remark that 'there is no Anglo-Indian official who can rise superior to his weak intellect and prejudices'. Taking the hint from the attitude of the Government, a section of the Sikh community who looked to Government for patronage also cooled off. The Sikh Educational Conference, held in Rawalpindi in 1911, refused to sponsor a resolution commending ... his translation. He sat in the evening a dejected man eating alone in his hotel room in Rawalpindi Cantonment. He had been rejected by the people whom he had given his life-blood and he would not dine in the dining-hall with other Britishers who shunned his company for having 'turned a Sikh' (Singh 1970, 142-143).

In 1912, Macauliffe wrote to Bhagat Lakshman Singh saying that a 'lobby had started working against him and the Sikhs' (Lal 1999, 139). Though the overwhelming majority of Sikhs approved of and supported Macauliffe, 'his relationship with certain groups within the community had not always been plain sailing' (Lal 1999, 139). Singh himself had a high opinion of Macauliffe, stating that 'to speak nothing of that time [of the Singh Sabha movement], even nowadays there is not one Sikh of Mr Macauliffe's learning and resources' (Lal 1999, 140).

A Sikh publication called *The Khalsa*, said that there was 'no denying the fact that the publication of Mr. Macauliffe's work' would be the 'introduction of a new era in our history' (Macauliffe 1909, I, x). The Sikh scriptures, it continued, though written in their own language, were much neglected by their people and it was no exaggeration to say that

> ninety per cent. of our co-religionists do not understand them. The Community receiving English education are without any idea of the sublime truths contained in the Granth Sahib. From infancy upwards their minds are moulded in such a way, that it becomes almost impossible for them to talk and write in any other language than English; and we shall not be exaggerating if we say that a great many of them find it difficult even to think in their own mother tongue. This being the case, an English translation of our Scriptures will at once appeal to the ever increasing community of educated men who will be the leaders of thought from the very nature of things. Already

> prepared by western culture to think and act independently, they will be constitutionally fitted to understand the catholicity of Sikh principles, and will feel a pleasure in spreading Sikh ideas far and wide (Macauliffe 1909, I, xi).

'Not less important', *The Khalsa* continued:

> will be the result of Sikh teachings on the minds of religious Europe and America. Already the Khalsa has achieved a world-wide renown in the matter of bravery. In the matter of religion, too, the name of the Khalsa will shine resplendently when the glorious deeds of our illustrious ancestors in the moral and religious world are made known far and wide. The translations of Hindu Scriptures by Professors Max Müller, Wilson, Monier Williams, and a host of other eminent writers on Oriental religions have drawn the attention of the whole civilized world to the Hindus and their literature. These translations have secured for the Hindus the sympathy of hundreds of savants and inquirers after religious truth (Macauliffe 1909, I, xi-xii).

In *Auld Lang Syne, Second Series*, Max Müller pays tribute to Macauliffe, 'who has spent many years among the Sikhs, and has with the help of their priests paid much attention to their Granth, has given us some most interesting and beautiful specimens of their poetry which form part of their sacred book' (Müller 1902, 77). Macauliffe, claiming to be acting under pressure from Sikh friends, reproduces this and similar encomia in the preface to *The Sikh Religion* (Macauliffe 1909, I, xiv).

Later Sikh Reaction

According to the influential Sikh scholar, Harbans Singh, writing in 1970:

> Macauliffe's translation of the Sikh Scriptures and his lives of the Gurus still remain unsurpassed. His work made the Sikh religion more extensively known and created among its votaries a new intellectual ferment. The publication in 1909 of *The Sikh Religion* laid the foundation of Sikh literature in English . . . (Singh 1970, 144).

Macauliffe's translation was, according to Harbans Singh, the result of a 'sustained and monumental labour of love'—the word 'monumental' usually accompanies any reference to Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion*—a 'work of high excellence and dignity' which, over the years, had been 'a beacon in the Sikh literary world'. Singh concludes:

> For as long as there is anyone wanting to explore this faith through the medium of the English language, Max Arthur Macauliffe's name will live: so will his six precious volumes on the Sikh religion. He is today remembered in the Punjab with much affection and reverence as an example of a civilian who, besides his official duties, devoted himself to research and learning for the restoration or interpretation of some aspect of the Eastern culture… (Singh 1970, 139).

According to another contemporary Sikh scholar, Harbans Lal:

> In his lifetime, Macauliffe wrote with great insight on Sikh theology and traditions, communicating it to the Western world while also contributing to the Sikh community's own understanding and reform of its faith. His seminal work, *The Sikh Religion*…was the catalyst of Western scholars' interest in Sikh studies. It has been in print ever since and is essential reading for all scholars of Sikhism.
>
> The translation of the Sikh holy book … was the first English translation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* to be accepted by the community. It established the Sikh scripture as a world scripture. It remains a classic translation' (Lal 1999, 129).

In the words of A.C. Banerjee, 'The modern phase of Sikh studies began really with the publication (1909) of Macauliffe's monumental six-volume work' and his 'great service to Sikh studies was that he prepared the ground for a comprehensive study of the early phase of Sikhism by placing at the disposal of scholars an elaborate collection of Sikh traditions' (Banerjee 1978, 242, 243).

Hew McLeod observes that Macauliffe's 'famous and enduring work' is still widely read and that the interpretation of the Sikh religion and community which he propounded:

> has ever since steadily gained ground. Today it commands the allegiance of most Sikh scholars and the implicit acceptance of most members of the Panth (the Sikh community). It is also the view of the Sikh religion and Panth which most foreign observers assume to be the correct one. The Sikh religion is a completely independent religion in its own right; and Sikhs of the Khalsa are the only orthodox and sufficient representatives of that faith. Macauliffe's work has played a considerable part in this process. He may have died unfulfilled, but fulfillment in abundance has certainly followed his death (McLeod 1996, 6).

Western Influences

The Tat Khalsa interpretation of Sikhism propagated by Macauliffe was both influenced by western thought and was, in turn, highly influential in disseminating a knowledge of the Sikh religion in the west. Though Macauliffe's work was undoubtedly uncritical by today's standards, according to McLeod, 'its influence has been profound. No other work has so effectively instructed western readers about Sikhism, with the result that the Tat Khalsa interpretation of the Sikh faith and community has been firmly fixed in the western understanding' (McLeod 1996, 10). In McLeod's words:

> Tat Khalsa was the radical section within the Singh Sabha movement, the reformist group which during the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth succeeded in imparting a new spirit and a new interpretation to the Panth. It was with members of the Tat Khalsa that Macauliffe had been particularly associated and

> it was entirely natural that his memory should be greatly venerated by its later descendants (McLeod 1996, 6-7).

The Singh Sabha was founded in Amritsar in 1873 and the majority of its members, later to be known as the Sanatan Sikhs, did not recognise any essential difference between Sikhs and Hindus. The Tat Khalsa movement, which vigorously challenged these views, was based in Lahore and was, as McLeod delicately puts it, 'influenced by western education' (McLeod 1996, 9). One of its most prominent members was the intimate friend and adviser of Macauliffe, Kahn Singh Nabha who, in 1898, published his famous book, *Ham Hindu Nahin* ('We are not Hindus').

Harbans Lal significantly entitled his 1999 article on Macauliffe , 'The Western Gateway to Sikhism'. However, the title of another version of this paper, published in 2013, 'Max Arthur Macauliffe: First Western Gateway to Study of Sikhism', makes an even stronger claim for the Irishman's pioneering work (Lal 2013). But western influences in Sikhism were not new for they 'had been found in the writings of missionaries and administrators ever since the British Empire began spreading into North-West India' (Barrier 1978, 166). According to Lal, Macauliffe in his lifetime, 'wrote with great insight on Sikh theology and traditions, communicating it to the Western world' and his 'seminal work, *The Sikh Religion* ... was the catalyst of Western scholars' interest in Sikh studies' (Lal 1999, 129).

Macauliffe saw Sikhism as in danger and in need of reform. As Lal puts it, 'His solution was to take Sikhism to the educated people of the West' (Lal 1999, 133), going on to quote Macauliffe: 'I am not without hope that when enlightened nations become acquainted with the merits of the Sikh religion, they will not willingly let it perish in the great abyss in which so many creeds have been engulfed' (Macauliffe 1905, 378; reproduced almost word-for-word in *The Sikh Religion,* Macauliffe 1909, I, lxxxviii). Macauliffe, who emphasised the 'evolutionary nature of Sikhism' (Barrier 1978, 174), initially intended only a translation of the *Granth,* but he extended this to include voluminous material on the Gurus, their lives, and writings. This was necessary, he said, 'so that the Sikhs and a Western audience could fully appreciate the richness of Sikh literature and tradition' (Barrier 1978, 176). Barrier notes Macauliffe's frequent reliance on western analogies in his work (Barrier 1978, 174, 177, 178, 182-183). Especially in the historical essay in the first volume, according to Barrier, 'Obviously writing for a Western audience, Macauliffe again went to great pains to draw comparisons between key doctrines in Sikh and Western history and metaphysics' (Barrier 1978, 182-183), but he sharply distinguished Sikhism from Hinduism.

Missionary to the West

Macauliffe drew frequent attention to Earnest Trumpp's position as a Christian missionary to the east, sometimes not even condescending to name him and referring to him dismissively as 'a missionary'. But Macauliffe was

himself a missionary to the west, beginning his famous work as follows: 'I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion' (Macauliffe 1909, I, v). Barrier speculates that Trumpp probably assumed from the beginning that Sikhs were Hindus and 'soon would be slipping back into the Hindu fold'. In Trumpp's words, Sikhism was a 'waning religion, that will soon belong to history' (Barrier 1978, 170). In these circumstances, the white man's burden was merely the equivalent of, in the famous phrase popularised by Daisy Bates in her book *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938), the duties of white settlers to Australian aborigines, to 'smooth the pillow of a dying race'.

In the nineteenth century, the enterprise of colonization was frequently conceived of in missionary terms. Indeed, religious missionaries were seen, and saw themselves, as an essential part of secular colonization. For another remarkable Irish pioneer in the field of Asian religions, the Buddhist monk U Dhammaloka, a critique of missions was a coded critique of empire. According to Lawrence Cox, Dhammaloka contradicts 'the assumption that early western Buddhists were necessarily pro-imperial Orientalists, it turns out that it was not just *Asian* Buddhists who mobilised against colonists and missionaries in this period' (Cox 2010, 174). Similarly, James and Margaret Cousins, Irish converts to Theosophy who had immigrated to India, took a different position on empire. As Gauri Viswanathan puts it in her book, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief,* James Cousins 'found himself drawn to the larger project of establishing the common foundations of Irish-Indian culture as the first step toward the overthrow of colonial rule in both countries' (Viswanathan 1998, 205; see also Foley and O'Connor eds., 2006).

Patronage

In Macauliffe's view, it soon became obvious that he could not combine his scholarly work with his official duties, and he claimed that in 1893 'representative Sikh societies, knowing that I appreciated their literature, requested me to *resign* [emphasis added] my appointment and undertake a translation of their sacred works' (Macauliffe 1909, I, ix). But, as he had become eligible for a pension, his 'resignation' from the Indian Civil Service should perhaps more accurately be described as 'retirement'. He also received financial support for his project from various Sikh sources. He reiterated on countless occasions that the reason he 'resigned' from the service was in order to engage fulltime in the translation of the *Granth*. However, the matter requires further investigation as is obvious from a 'demi-official' letter from E.D. Maclagan, Chief Secretary to Government of the Punjab to Sir Harold Stuart, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, dated 6 May 1908:

> In continuation of my official letter no. 743 of today's date, regarding Macauliffe's translation of the 'Granth', I am directed to say that in our official letter we have not taken any notice of the statement frequently reported by Mr. Macauliffe that he resigned the Civil Service to undertake the work in question. This statement the Lieutenant-Governor bids me explain is scarcely in accordance with facts (Government of India 1908, p. 1).

Macauliffe was bitterly disappointed when his requests for patronage from the Punjab government were either rejected outright or were responded to parsimoniously. He incurred extra expense by employing *gyanis* to help him with his great task, reputedly spending two lakhs (200,000) of rupees out of his own pocket. Both the Punjab Government and the Government of India refused official sanction for *The Sikh Religion*, while Macauliffe as earlier mentioned rejected contemptuously the Punjab Government's paltry offer of a subvention of 5,000 rupees. Macauliffe's work failed to attract patronage from the India Office. However, no less a figure than Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, who presided over Macauliffe's public lecture, 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant People', which took place at the United Service Institute, Simla, on 16 July 1903,[2] declared, regarding Macauliffe's work-in-progress, that

> It must be a matter of great satisfaction to Mr. Macauliffe that the Amritsar Singh Sabha have accepted his translations as being thoroughly accurate. We may say with confidence that in putting the study of the Sikh sacred writings within our reach Mr. Macauliffe has earned the approbation of all who know the great value of the Sikh soldier; the cordial recognition of the rulers of the country, and the gratitude of the chiefs, sardars, and people of the Sikh community—a feeling of gratitude which I feel sure will be much increased when Mr. Macauliffe has translated the sacred writings into the ordinary Panjabi of the day, a labour which, I understand, he is about to commence, and which I hope will result in their general dissemination through every Sikh household in the country (Macauliffe 1909, I, xxix).

Though Macauliffe saw his labours as serving the political interests of the Sikhs, he by no means saw these interests as anti-imperial. The contrary, in fact. In 1903, he recommended the Sikhs to the British as potential allies in a pamphlet with the significant title, *A Lecture on the Sikh Religion and Its Advantages to the State*, that is, the British state.

Macauliffe emphasised analogies with western thought but sharply distinguished Sikhism from Hinduism, a position that was politically as well as theologically motivated, as Mahatma Gandhi shrewdly observed having read Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* while lodged in Yervada prison in 1924. Gandhi wrote that the book:

> is a life-story of the Gurus giving copious extracts from their compositions. It is a sumptuously printed publication. It loses its value

[2] Most accounts give 6 July, based on the published lectures (Macauliffe 1903) but the *Times of India* 18 July 1903, p. 9 has a report dated 16 July of the lectures from Simla delivered 'today'.

> because of its fulsome praise of the English rule and the author's emphasis on Sikhism as a separate religion having nothing in common with Hinduism (Gandhi 1967, 155).

Tony Ballantyne argues that 'in many respects, Macauliffe's work was the product of a highly collaborative effort, fitting Irschick's model of colonial knowledge as a dialogic construct: it was the result of the meeting and mutual modification of Indian and European learned traditions' (Ballantyne 2002a, 110-111). Doubtless there is truth in this but it perhaps fails to consider sufficiently the radically unequal nature of this 'dialogue' and the dangerously ambiguous meaning of the word 'collaboration' (see Professor Anne Murphy's paper in this issue). Indeed, work such as Macauliffe's could best be seen as an example of the mid-nineteenth-century doctrine of 'ruling India according to Indian ideas', where the celebration of an indigenous culture, far from being anti-colonial, was in fact a seductive, indeed the scenic, route to empire.

Conclusion

Macauliffe, who never married, died of cancer at his London residence, 10 Sinclair Gardens, West Kensington, on 15 March 1913. According to McLeod, 'None of the sources which I have seen makes mention of a wife' (McLeod 1996, 7), and though Macauliffe occasionally used as a figure for domestic happiness the image 'a woman in every house', his own household seemed lacking in this important respect. However, there is evidence that he had at least one extended relationship with Mussummat Rahiman *alias* Bhuri, the daughter of a servant, his bearer, who, on 17 February 1888, appeared before the Court of the District Magistrate, Lahore, claiming maintenance from Macauliffe for their three 'illegitimate' children (two girls and a boy), whom she produced in court. Her legal representative, W.E. Browne, a Pleader of the Chief Court of the Punjab, was himself involved in a court case with Macauliffe at the same time. The Browne case was settled out of court as was that of Rahiman. However, twenty-four years later, on 17 October 1912, Macauliffe drew up his will which contains the following sentence: 'Payments made by the Alliance bank at Lahore to the daughter of a former servant of mine should cease'. Clearly Lal's statement that 'Macauliffe left no direct descendant' (Lal 2013) needs to be revisited.

Harbans Lal regards Macauliffe as a convert to the Sikh religion, claiming that he was 'One of the first Sikhs to speak and write about his religion in English' (Lal 1999, 129). As already noted, Lal described him as '[b]orn into Protestant Christianity in predominantly Catholic Ireland', adding that 'he converted to an Indian religion which had a similar protestant history and relationship with the dominant religion and priesthood', and 'practised the Sikh faith as a *sahjdhari* Sikh, not taking on the external code of dress and hair' (Lal 1999, 131). In the unpaginated preliminary matter to *Sikh Art and Literature*, edited by Kerry Brown, reference is made to 'the

translations and writings of the British Raj convert M.A. Macauliffe' (Brown 1999). Bhagat Lakshman Singh wrote that 'Mr Macauliffe started as a Sikh Research Scholar and died as a Sikh, boycotted by the members of his own service and race' (Lal 1999, 139). When Macauliffe died his Punjabi Muslim servant, Mohammad, wrote to Bhai Kahn Singh informing him of the death and stating that until ten minutes before he died, Macauliffe was reciting the *Japji*, the Sikh morning prayer (Singh 1970, 143). According to Kahn Singh, 'Macauliffe's death prompted a great debate within the local English community. Because he had "turned Sikh", the town's Christians put up a resistance to Macauliffe's body being buried in the local cemetery which, they argued, was meant for Christians' (Lal 1999, 139).[3] An even more recent author confidently announced in two publications that Macauliffe 'converted to the Sikh religion' (Foley 2005, 197 and Foley 2009). However, it would appear that the question of his 'conversion' is still an open one and in need of further research.

Macauliffe in Sikh dress.

There is a general belief that Macauliffe was in poor financial circumstances when he died. According to McLeod, Macauliffe died 'an impoverished and bitter man, recognition denied and his objectives unrealised' (McLeod 1996, 6). He may well have been embittered but he scarcely was impoverished, the gross value of his estate being, according to his will, over £19,000.[4] There is evidence to show that when he retired to England in 1904 he bought the freehold of two houses in Sinclair Gardens in London, one of which, it has been suggested, he offered to Kahn Singh, though the offer was declined. After his death, one of his nieces, Cissie Moran, brought an unsuccessful action in the Chancery Division to set aside certain deeds by which her uncle had conveyed the two houses in Sinclair Gardens to trustees for the benefit of another niece, Mrs. Grey (*The Times*, 13 November 1914). Macauliffe left most of his estate to his relatives but bequeathed the copyright of *The Sikh Religion* to Kahn Singh. The Sikh Educational Conference in 1913 passed a vote of condolence and the Sikhs of Rawalpindi, where previously Macauliffe had dined alone, set up a Macauliffe Memorial Society to raise funds to establish a library in his memory, but the amount collected was insufficient. Among those who subscribed, and sent a letter of support, was the Irish-born lieutenant-governor of Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The money was eventually given to Khalsa College, Amritsar, to fund an annual Macauliffe Memorial Medal for the best student in Sikh theology and history. The medal is still awarded on an occasional basis.

Dialectically understood, and in no sense an apologia for empire, one might suggest that such Irish imperial servants as George Grierson, author of

[3] Lal's reference here is to a 'Personal communication from Gyani Gurdit Singh of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Shatabadi Committee, Chandigarh, 1992'.

[4] Equivalent to several million pounds today. See e.g. www.measuringworth.com accessed 21 Jan 2017.

the *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903-1928), William Crooke, author of *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (1894, 1896), and Vincent Arthur Smith author of *The Oxford History of India* (1919), did India some service. All three had been students in Trinity College Dublin and qualified for the Indian Civil Service in the same year, 1871. Macauliffe surely deserves inclusion in this illustrious company in recognition of his six-volume work *The Sikh Religion*, his collaboration with indigenous scholars and in the process his redefinition of notions of authorship, especially in a colonial context, his transformation of the oral wisdom of the *gyanis* into print, his contribution to the reform of Sikhism, and the enormous success of his missionary work in promoting a sympathetic knowledge and understanding of Sikhism, especially the Tat Khalsa interpretation, in the 'West'.

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