
Sikhism

From: "Atheist Society" <atheist_society@hotmail.com>
To: afreethinker@hotmail.com
Subject: Dear Ali we have a problem, please help!
Date: Fri, 05 Oct 2001 20:40:30 +0000

Dear Ali, please help us. We were very impressed with your website and agreed that religion in general is no longer needed, we can all be humanistic and live in peace and harmony. We are in the process of making a website which will hopefully help to destroy the religious doctrines which divide humanity. We were doing great with knocking out Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Baha'i, even Buddhism but we have gotten very stuck with Sikhism. This religion is (to put it nicely) "a big pain in the ass" (Please pardon the language) We have only found one site which tries (very poorly) to argue that even this religion is not needed, but the argument is irrational and very unscientific unlike the very rational arguments you use. When we read the following from your website, we found what you said to be amazingly interesting:

"Doubt Everything Find Your Own Light."

"Last Words

Dear friend, if you look for meaning in life, don't look for it in religions; don't go from one cult to another or from one guru to the next. You can expend all your life or look for eternity and will find nothing but disappointment and disillusionment. Look instead in service to humanity. You will find "meaning" in your love for other human beings. You can experience God when you help someone who needs your help. The only truth that counts is the love that we have for each other. This is absolute and real. The rest is mirage, fancies of human imagination and fallacies of our own making." By Ali Sina

Why is this interesting? Because we found this religion of Sikhism to be in agreement with you! This is why we have a problem. We tried to look at their holy text (Adi Granth) but didnt find the usual absurdities we found in the other religious books. In fact its refreshingly inspiring and very good!? Maybe you can have some better luck. We tried to visit a

couple of websites and got more of a shock. Did you know that they believed in Democracy, freedom of speech, choice, expression, freedom of religion, pluralism, human rights, equality between men and women, equality of all people regardless of race, religion, caste, creed, status etc. 300 years before the existence of the USA! Theirs is the only religion which says in their religious scriptures that women are equal in every respect to men. They even had women soldiers leading armies in to battle against "you know who" (The usual suspects - Muslims!) Their history is a proud one, they fought in both World Wars. Even Hitler praised them for their bravery and Aryan heritage!

Dear Ali, this religion is hard for us to try and criticise but you are an expert and may find some faults overlooked by us. In their holy book, there is a round earth, water is made from chemical elements, there is even mention of the evolution process, big bang and life on other planets! This is pretty crazy and amazing stuff, who would have thought that these New York taxi drivers (There are lots of Sikh taxi drivers in NY) would have such an amazing faith? We read up some information of what Bertrand Russell had to say about Sikhism, this is the man who destroyed Christianity (same applies to Islam and Judaism) and exposed its absurdities, but even this great man got stuck when it came to Sikhism! In fact he gave up and said

"that if some lucky men survive the onslaught of the third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them.

Russell was asked that he was talking about the third world war, but isn't this religion capable of guiding mankind before the third world war?

In reply, Russell said, "Yes, it has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out in the broad daylight, the splendid doctrines of this religion which has come into existence for the benefit of the entire mankind. This is their greatest sin and the Sikhs cannot be freed of it."

Please bear in mind that Bertrand Russell was a great philosopher and free thinker. We have been trying for weeks now to find a way to fairly and rationally criticize and find fault with this religion but have failed. We even found out that there are many people converting to this religion in the USA and Europe as well as Russia (Mostly well educated and affluent white people). We tried to find some of their literature and see what kind of claims they make, but unfortunately they have no missionary material as they do not have missionaries! People become Sikh by learning usually by chance or by coming in to contact with them. They are currently the 5th biggest religion in the world and growing quite fast in the west and Russia.

Please help us as we are stuck, to give you an example of they are all about we found the following websites:

<http://www.sikhnet.com> (This is a pretty good site and helpful)

<http://www.hope.at/sikhism> (This site is very easy to follow, check it out, they have a Womans section and a Martyrs section, it looks like that you are not the only one trying to expose the falseness of Islam, Sikhs scholars did it hundreds of years ago and got killed for it!)

<http://www.sikhs.org> (This is the site that was on CNN when Sikhs in the USA were mistaken for Arabs and Middle Easterners and were attacked by mindless morons)

Please help us out, we cant make our website about religion being the cause of war and disharmony when we have this one and only religion which makes a hell of a lot of sense! lol (I thought Atheism had all the answers but were kind of stuck now.)

We look forward to hearing from you, we respect your great views and want to promote them to everyone, thank you for your time, take care.

Dr. John Smith

Dear Dr. John Smith,

Thanks for the email. First of all let me assure you that I have not embarked on the mission to destroy all the religions. If the belief in a religion makes you happy and content, please go for it.

My purpose in writing is to fight against hate not against faith. There are many religions that preach good things. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Baha'i are the examples. Even there is lots of goodness in Christianity. I am afraid I have little knowledge of Sikhism. I cannot agree or disagree with your enthusiasm about this religion. I admit that my knowledge of Sikhism is very superficial. I live in a part of Canada that has a big population of Sikhs. They have many temples here and we often hear they fight over ridiculous things like whether they should sit on chairs or on the floor. There has been also some shootings and assassinations among the moderate and the fundamentalist faction of the Sikhs over, who should be in control of the temple and handle the funds.

You perhaps have more information of the tenets of Sikhism, but as Christ said, "you'll know them by their fruits". When I see the Sikhs, I do not see much difference between them and the rest of the people. As the matter of fact many of them are shrewd businessmen but many people try not to deal with them because of their bad reputation. (unreliable, bad service, etc) I personally have great business associates among them and have been dealing with them for years. I

have had bad experiences with some of them but those with whom I stay put are trustworthy and I am very pleased of them.

As I said my intention is not to fight religions. I want to fight hateful doctrines not false beliefs. I personally would not endorse any belief system. I encourage rational thinking, independent thinking and freethinking. Religious thinking is opposed to that. In any religion you have a guru, a prophet or a messenger who is inspired by superior knowledge and all the the rest are followers. Independent thinking is encouraged as long a it does not contradict with the thinking of the leader. This brings stagnation of thought. One is given certain liberties to think on his own but s/he is not allowed to exceed the limits set by the original guru. The words of prophet or the guru are the ultimate balance to distinguish between the right and the wrong.

I recall few years ago there was a legal fight where the Sikhs wanted to enter into RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and keep their turban. In my opinion this was the sign of backwardness because it showed that the followers of Sikhism are unable to adapt with time. I was sorry when the politicians bent the rule and allowed Sikh police wear turbans because they wanted their votes.

All those good teachings that you attribute to Sikhism exist in many other religions. As a matter of fact Bahaism is the most advanced doctrine. Bahais also do not have that negative image that the Sikhs have left of themselves like their outdated dress code, hair code, ceremonial dagger and a history of violence. You praised the Sikhs for their bravery and for fighting against Islam. In my opinion Baha'is are much more brave for facing Muslims without any fight, sword or violence. This is bravery.

Anyway, I do not wish to refute any religion if that religion does not advocate violence or threaten the peace of the world. But I have chosen not to be a follower. I was a follower and now I am a freethinker. Freethinking is better. I think the desire to be a follower (of any religion) stems from the fact that people are not yet mature and like children do not have the self reliance to choose their own ways. They need someone else telling them what is right and what is not. It is interesting however, that the same brainwashed followers brag about the good teachings of their religions to prove that their way is better. One wonders if they know that these teachings are good, they must have used their own judgment, and if they have used their own judgment then they are perfectly capable to distinguish between the good and the bad. So why they need these religions to begin with? You enumerated all the good teachings of Sikhism. If you KNOW that these are good teachings, why you need to follow someone to tell you what you already know? What if this person you want to follow tell you: "kill the unbelievers, beat your wife or cut the hands of the thief" would you still follow him blindly? If you believe in him you should. But if you take the exception to these barbaric teachings then you are using your

independent thinking and in that case following a guru or a prophet is superfluous.

Kind regards

Ali Sina

Ryan on Sikhism

Ryan Ryan <ryan_american@yahoo.com>

Ryan Responds to Ali Sina on Sikhism:

Hi Ali, I sent you an e-mail about 2 days ago and haven't received a reply, so I guess you're busy. Here is my response to your Sikhism debate. Please add it when you have the chance. I have dissected this argument so I can make my points easier.

Ali – “Dear Dr. John Smith,

Thanks for the email. First of all let me assure you that I have not embarked on the mission to destroy all the religions. If the belief in a religion makes you happy and content, please go for it.

My purpose in writing is to fight against hate not against faith. There are many religions that preach good things. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Baha'i are the examples. Even there is lots of goodness in Christianity.”

Yes Ali, there are good things in these religions but there are also some absurdities right? I mean many absurdities regardless of the way they are interpreted? I mean literal ones not philosophical ones (depending on the philosophy of course!).

“I am afraid I have little knowledge of Sikhism. I cannot agree or disagree with your enthusiasm about this religion. I admit that my knowledge of Sikhism is very superficial.”

Well I'll try and help you out there.

“I live in a part of Canada that has a big population of Sikhs. They have many temples here and we often hear they fight over ridiculous things like whether they should sit on chairs or on the floor.”

Well Sikhs are only human and do not necessarily reflect their faith. There are many African Americans who are criminals, doesn't mean the actual 'race' is bad right?

"There has been also some shootings and assassinations among the moderate and the fundamentalist faction of the Sikhs over, who should be in control of the temple and handle the funds."

Still, that's a political and financial dispute, it's not over the actual religion they are fighting.

"You perhaps have more information of the tenets of Sikhism, but as Christ said, "you'll know them by their fruits"."

Jesus said a lot of things, they weren't all necessarily 'good'. In a way Christ had a good point but that doesn't mean this standard is the right one to apply in all cases. Again if we look at the African Americans, they have a high crime rate and a high prison population. Doesn't mean that all black people are bad does it? Most likely it's the environment they are brought up in.

"When I see the Sikhs, I do not see much difference between them and the rest of the people."

Well they're only human.

"As the matter of fact many of them are shrewd businessmen but many people try not to deal with them because of their bad reputation. (unreliable, bad service, etc)"

Bill Gates is a very shrewd businessman, he is famous for it, his company's products are often criticized as being of poor quality and functionality, it still doesn't make him a bad person does it? He has given away millions to charity and poor people!

"I personally have great business associates among them and have been dealing with them for years."

So at least you know that they are not ALL bad. :-)

"I have had bad experiences with some of them but those with whom I stay put are trustworthy and I am very pleased of them."

Well like I said, there's always a few who spoil the party.

"As I said my intention is not to fight religions. I want to fight hateful doctrines not false beliefs."

Good and noble goal, I wish you well.

"I personally would not endorse any belief system."

Why? Have you studied ALL religions?

"I encourage rational thinking, independent thinking and freethinking."

Good, so do I, and so does Sikhism. Sikh literally means a 'seeker of truth'

"Religious thinking is opposed to that."

Yes, most religions are, but not Sikhism.

"In any religion you have a guru, a prophet or a messenger who is inspired by superior knowledge and all the the rest are followers."

True to a point but not in Sikhism. In this religion, its Gurus (literally meaning 'Teachers') taught people to stop believing in nonsense ideas and pointless

rituals. They encouraged free thinking and the use of common sense. The religion started in a place called Punjab, in the modern day country of India, it began in the 1400's. India was ruled by the Muslims at that time, but the majority religion was Hinduism. The Gurus pointed out the absurdities in both and said that the Hindu 'caste system' and ill treatment of women was wrong. They stated that ALL people are equal, they even said that they were not superior in anyway, they were ordinary people who believed in goodness and love of all humanity, they want to encourage others to think they same way. Sikhism is the only religion which clearly says that "Women are equal to men", as well as many other noble teachings. I know Baha'i claims the same about equality but Sikhism said it first! Ali why do we go to school? Because we need to learn about things we don't know and to get educated in general as well as to become 'better' people. The teachers are more or less our guides, they teach us important information etc.

"Independent thinking is encouraged as long a it does not contradict with the thinking of the leader."

Not in Sikhism, it says that you are allowed to think anything you want, you are allowed to question everything in it. I have done it myself and have come to the conclusion it's a great faith. But Ill explain that later.

"This brings stagnation of thought. One is given certain liberties to think on his own but s/he is not allowed to exceed the limits set by the original guru."

Again, not the case in Sikhism. In fact, Sikhism is quite in tune with Science. It is the only religion I have seen that doesn't go against evolution! Also Doctor Smith in his initial post mentioned some other facts in Sikhism. This is quite amazing when you consider that the religion is more than 500 years old and nobody else knew that information in the 1400's!.

"The words of prophet or the guru are the ultimate balance to distinguish between the right and the wrong."

No Ali, in Sikhism, the Gurus only guide you to be a better person, they encourage you too look for knowledge and to better your life and of those around you. If a problem comes up then the words of the Guru are there to guide you but you don't have to follow

them if you 'think' you know better. However, I haven't seen anything bad in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), the Sikh holy scriptures which gives bad advice. There's a lot of great advice.

"I recall few years ago there was a legal fight where the Sikhs wanted to enter into RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and keep their turban."

So what? What's wrong with that?

"In my opinion this was the sign of backwardness because it showed that the followers of Sikhism are unable to adapt with time. "

No Ali, this is not backwardness, now you are applying your own personal standards of what is 'modern' – what gives YOU that right? Tomorrow some young high school kid might tell you that you're '1970's' style hair cut is 'backward' Now would that be right? :-). Does that mean that the young man is right? No, because even if we ignore the religious reason, its can still be all about personal choice. Many people wear a baseball cap, is that backwards? They as citizens have every right to be treated equally. Wearing a turban is a symbol of their faith. There is no harm in them wearing it. Or do you feel it is harmful in some way?

"I was sorry when the politicians bent the rule and allowed Sikh police wear turbans because they wanted their votes."

Ali, are you intolerant or what? If you are getting mugged or about to be killed and some guy with comes and saves your life, are you gonna say "no don't save me, you have a turban on!"? Who cares? How does it get in the way of him saving your life? Also how did they bend a rule? Not all rules are right are they? Look at how many laws get repealed. Only as recently as 1993, millions of people were treated as second class citizens in South Africa (their OWN country!). It was the law that blacks can not go in white areas! Now tell me, was it wrong for the politicians to repeal the evil Apartheid rules? Was it right for Nazi Germany to make laws to persecute Jews? Was Gandhi right to break the 'salt' law in which he asserted his right to go to the sea and make salt? Not all laws are necessarily right or good.

"All those good teachings that you attribute to Sikhism exist in many other religions."

Yes but other religions also have absurdities which are absurd beyond belief. Sikhism doesn't have these absurdities. I am not talking about the philosophical parts of a faith as philosophy is open to interpretation. When some guy said "The World is your oyster" he didn't mean it in the literal sense. Do you see my point? I mean the parts like when it says "kill all the unbelievers" in the Koran. This isn't philosophy, this is a CLEAR instruction. It is absurdities like these I am talking about.

"As a matter of fact"

FACT? Careful Ali, now you may be jumping to some obscure conclusions :-)

"Bahaism is the most advanced doctrine."

Really? Based on what? I beg to differ Ali. Ill do this later in the debate. But I seriously think that the Baha'i faith is fundamentally flawed.

"Bahais also do not have that negative image that the Sikhs have left of themselves like their outdated dress code,"

Again you apply YOUR own standards, what if a kid says "Hey Ali, whats with the grandfather 70's clothes?" Again on what grounds do you say it is outdated? Clothes are clothes. What about mini skirts? They came out in the 60's and went out. They are back in again. Indian women have worn saris (a long cloth type garment wrapped around there bodies) for 5000 years, they still wear them. Again my learned friend just because YOU consider something outdated, doesn't mean it is. Clothes are a part of individual choice. Also they are optional, not mandatory.

"hair code,"

Symbolic only, it is not mandatory but again, what's wrong with long hair? There are many people in Scandinavian countries who have long hair, again there are many Sikhs who have hair cuts too. There is a choice.

"ceremonial dagger"

This is a symbolic item, it is actually meant for protection of the weak and defenceless. It doesn't have to be a big dagger in this day and age, you can get a key ring size one. Its all symbolic nowadays Ali. But in some countries you would do well to carry one. In Mughal India, they had to carry one as they were being heavily persecuted. These days of course there is no persecution, now its like the cross that Christians wear, only symbolic.

"and a history of violence."

Depends on which violence your talking about Ali, if you actually read Sikh history then you'll see that they fought in both World Wars against the Nazis and many defensive wars in India against the Islamic invaders and persecutors. You should know what this feels like because your own country Iran is a defeated nation, whereas Sikhs are not. (no offence) Violence is not always a bad or evil thing, sometimes it makes the difference between survival and extinction!

"You praised the Sikhs for their bravery and for fighting against Islam. In my opinion Baha'is are much more brave for facing Muslims without any fight, sword or violence."

Even I praise them for their bravery. The Doctor is right to do so. Ali, if you knew anything about Indian history then you'll understand why the Sikhs HAD to fight. The Baha'I were in Iran in the 19th century, by this time Islam in Iran was nothing compared to tyrannical Mughal India. The Baha'I would have been wiped out in 16th century India, like the millions of non-violent Buddhists in Sindh province were!. The Sikhs used non-violence for 200 years but it didn't soften the Muslims resolve to convert them by force.

80 million Hindus were slaughtered because of using non-violence, tell me, how much crap should a person put up with? Until they are nearly wiped out? Look at Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kashmir etc. They are Muslim majority nations, you know why? Because they didn't fight back, they were defeated and are now enslaved in Islam. Sounds similar to Iran. Where did non-violence get the Buddhists in Afghanistan? They were crushed

easily and were forced converted to Islam, the effects of which are still being felt today. (Taliban etc.)

"This is bravery."

No Ali, non-violence when taken to absurd limits is sheer STUPIDITY! Not bravery. When a person is willing to risk their own neck for the sake of others, that is bravery. When one fights back to protect their people and family, their rights to freedom and liberty, instead of 'submitting' like a coward, that is bravery. Gandhi was a believer in non-violence and it worked against the British, because they had a conscience, against Hitler he would have been crushed mercilessly.

"Anyway, I do not wish to refute any religion if that religion does not advocate violence or threaten the peace of the world."

That's cool with me.

"But I have chosen not to be a follower."

Nor me, but there's nothing wrong with being a student right? Nothing wrong with learning is there?

"I was a follower and now I am a freethinker."

I'm a free thinker too. Well at least I like to think so.

"Freethinking is better."

Yes it is.

"I think the desire to be a follower (of any religion) stems from the fact that people are not yet mature and like children do not have the self reliance to choose their own ways."

True, but what if an ideology promotes free thought anyway, then what's wrong with that? I mean I vote for the republican party, I agree with their ideology, doesn't mean I cant think for myself does it? Just means that I agree with them, that's all.

"They need someone else telling them what is right and what is not."

Yes and No. In school we do a lot of things, some are good and some are bad. We need teachers to tell us the difference sometimes. Same in adulthood, we still sometimes cannot distinguish between right and wrong because we ALL have different value systems. For example, my friend, she works in a hotel, she steals their stuff, stationary, towels, toiletries etc. I think she is wrong but she thinks she right, she says that there is no harm in it, the hotel

makes millions in profit, what's a few bucks worth of items? But I still say its stealing but she doesn't agree! See what I mean? My values are not necessarily the same as hers. So sometimes we need some 'guidance' right?

"It is interesting however, that the same brainwashed followers brag about the good teachings of their religions to prove that their way is better."

True, but not in Sikhism, they don't look for converts, people become Sikh of their own free will once they learn about the faith. Also there's nothing wrong with comparing ideologies is there? If we didn't compare the ideologies of political parties we wouldn't know who to vote for right?

"One wonders if they know that these teachings are good, they must have used their own judgment, and if they have used their own judgment then they are perfectly capable to distinguish between the good and the bad."

Not necessarily Ali, like I said about my friend who steals petty items, there are many gray areas. There are many things we sometimes are not sure about. For example, human cloning, there are lots of people who are for it and lots against it. Same with Abortion, so many people cant make up their minds. That's where we could do with the help of a 'guide' right? Also many people follow ideologies they themselves agree with. If I vote republican, or for Bush, then I do so because I agree with the party politics. If I agree with a religion a great deal, and it makes sense to

me, then why not use its guidance? I might get to a point in my life where I might have to make a tough decision, the religion might have the answer I am looking for? Do u see my point?

"So why they need these religions to begin with? You enumerated all the good teachings of Sikhism. If you KNOW that these are good teachings, why you need to follow someone to tell you what you already know?"

Because Ali, as well as the reasons I have explained above, a person like the good Doctor is probably a middle aged man with a university degree and years of solid education behind him, I am sure he wasn't born with all that intelligence and knowledge he has? It took him years to attain that level of knowledge and wisdom. However, most people are not as good as him or you. Most people are not Doctors and do not go to universities etc. They do not get the chance to develop their minds, and it is these people that religion (Well Sikhism anyway) can help. It can help intelligent people too, but especially the ignorant people who believe in nonsense and cannot use their own minds, the ones who still believe in fairy tales. Sikhism is not like other 'religions', it does not claim absolute truth and knowledge. It doesn't not make silly claims like the Bible and Koran etc.

Although there are many fascinating scientific concepts in it.

"What if this person you want to follow tell you: "kill the unbelievers, beat your wife or cut the hands of the thief" would you still follow him blindly?"

Ali, Sikhism doesn't say that, nor does it ask you to 'follow' blindly, it asks you to use your own logic

and rational thinking. Sikhism is supposed to be a guide. It believes in one 'God' or 'creative force' or 'life force' and its real aim is to help you 'reach' God.

"If you believe in him you should. But if you take the exception to these barbaric teachings then you are using your independent thinking and in that case following a guru or a prophet is superfluous."

No Ali, it depends on an individuals value system. Although I don't agree with 'killing' there are many who do. Not everyone is 'good' or 'humanistic' – Someone like Hitler would have no problem in killing someone else. Also in Sikhism the Guru doesn't ask you to follow him, they ask you to follow your own common sense. Sikhism believes in God, which is the only thing you can try to make an argument against. But I can even answer that if you want, but Ill let you ask me first of how I can come to a LOGICAL conclusion that a 'God' or 'creative force' exists! Also you are

using the term 'Guru' incorrectly. It means 'Teacher' - Just like a teacher teaches you science, math or English at school, a true Guru teaches you about 'life' and 'God' in the same way.

Ryan