

Praise for *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?*

'In its depth, breadth, and seriousness, this volume may stand for some time to come as the single most important biography of Mother Teresa in English.'

'Gëzim Alpion has produced the first account of Mother Teresa to focus mainly on the details of her early and middle life, rather than spiritual inspiration and her later fame.'

'Professor Alpion's encyclopedic narrative addresses many more issues about Mother Teresa, including certain reproaches and issues of her exploitation by others. But a great value of this book is that he has provided us with the fullest portrait yet of her native culture and her maturation, which is obviously necessary in fully understanding her. I have observed and admired Mother Teresa and her Missionaries for many years, but in reading this volume I was reminded, for the first time, of a Balkan archetype: that of the spiritual Albanian woman – regardless of religion.'

Stephen Schwartz
Executive Director, Center for Islamic Pluralism
Illyria, New York, USA
(19-22 January 2007, Vol. 17, No. 1614, p. 6)

'After *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?* scholarship about Mother Teresa will not be the same. ... In his unparalleled scholarly book, Alpion has presented a multidimensional portrait of Mother Teresa. And she appears human as she rarely did in any discourse about her.'

Gaston Roberge
Professor of Film and Communication Studies, St Xavier's College, Calcutta, India
The New Leader, Chennai, India
(Combined Issue of 1-15 and 16-31 December 2006, p. 51)

'One must ungrudgingly give it to Gëzim that this has been a work of monumental proportions involving great dexterity. He uses celebrity discourse as an analytical tool and aims it for all and sundry. All methodological exclusivity has been abjured, allowing the multihued disciplines to coalesce as needed in the research. It certainly is not a recapitulation of the oft-recounted philanthropism of

Mother Teresa; rather the humaneness that lay underneath has been shorn of its external trappings.'

'Gëzim's work has received both accolades as well as opprobrium worldwide, to date at least fifty reviews in English and other European languages have appeared and he has been focused on the small screen as well. All this makes the book compulsory reading.'

'The Mother's relationship with the Vatican inspires awe, as to the extent of influence wielded by the diminutive nun. Gëzim unflinchingly ascribes, that despite her philanthropism, she was definitely 'used' by the Vatican to stem the progress of communism in her own country as also in other communist strongholds. These facts are uncovered with meticulous detail. Mother Teresa was inevitably the product of the media of both the Eastern and the Western variants; that she colluded with these efforts is well known. She was an adroit saleswoman, as she blatantly proclaimed; her work should be propagated with greater intensity, since it was meant for the poor.'

Dr Bonita Aleaz
Department of Political Science, Calcutta University India
The Statesman, Calcutta, India
(22 July 2007, p. 17)

'This book is the work of an open and dedicated scholar, who, despite his reverence for the nun, has yet striven to be as unbiased as possible, never letting his emotions get in the way. I would have no hesitation at all in recommending this book to everyone.'

Professor Cyril Veliath
The New Leader, Chennai, India
(Combined Issue of 1-15 and 16-31 December 2006, p. 51)

'Dr Alpion is to be congratulated on both the depth of his research spread over several years, and the balanced way he sets out his facts.'

'Nothing of consequence in pursuit of examining the facts and opinions the author presents to his readers is omitted.'

'It is a clever book, providing a great deal of original and new thought on the subject but it is not a book to skim through in a couple of hours.'

Primrose Peacock
Catholic South West, Devon, Cornwall and Dorset, UK

'Alpion is particularly interesting when explaining how, after receiving the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, Mother Teresa became subject to both the Albanian media's eagerness to hail her as a patriot and the Macedonians' attempts to 'usurp' her in the months prior to her beatification in 2003.'

'[Alpion] rightly identifies a lack of information about the former Agnes Bojaxhiu's ethnic background and early years and provides a helpful catalogue of biographical inaccuracies.'

'Any reader inclined to the view that Mother Teresa was 'obsessively devoted to a religious superstar' may find this book interesting, but, as Alpion correctly anticipated, it is not one in which I recognise the woman that I knew.'

Kathryn Spink
The Tablet, London, UK
(6 January 2007, p. 23)

'Gëzim Alpion's book *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?*, which seeks to address the nature of her fame, celebrity and devotion to faith, is unique in locating the appeal of Mother Teresa within today's broader celebrity culture. He also provides previously unknown and quite striking information about her personal life.'

'For Alpion, celebrity culture is a modern form of religion and Mother Teresa was the ultimate religious celebrity of the modern era.'

'Alpion's important contribution to the literature on Mother Teresa is to reveal that she was almost certainly motivated to enter the mission by the death of her father, Nikollë Bojaxhiu.'

'...readers ... will find some striking information with quite uncomfortable implications for supporters of Mother Teresa. Her devotion to Jesus was a personal attempt to deal with grief, and her dedication to the poor of Calcutta part of her effort towards self-salvation. Similar to many celebrity figures, it was all about me, me, me. This puts her work into a whole new and rather less flattering light.'

Dr Stuart Derbyshire
Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Birmingham, UK
Spiked Magazine, London, UK
(Issue 7517 – 5 April 2007)

'[A] superbly researched work....After Germaine Greer, Christopher Hitchens, and Susan Shields this book of Alpion's feels like a whiff of delightfully fresh air.'

Cyril Veliath
Professor of Indian Philosophy
Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan
Bulletin of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan
(No. 41, 2006, pp. 297-301)

'Alpion [who] writes illuminatingly about different forms of 'celebrity discourse'...has written an absorbing analysis what this nun has meant to the world, and particularly to the Albanians...'

John Hodgson
Light Magazine, London, UK
(Issue 5, Winter 2006, p. 22)

'This engaging book raises as many questions as it answers.'

'Alpion unpacks the full historical background in meticulous detail... The result is intriguing, if a little unsatisfactory. His thesis is original: Mother Teresa knew well what she was about... Her success and subsequent 'fame' were of her own making, and she was far brighter than she made out... So there was sacrifice involved in her quest for fame, but was her integrity one of the casualties? That is what this book tries to explore — hence its telling subtitle.'

Dr Lavinia Byrne (a writer and broadcaster, and a former nun)
Church Times, London, UK
(Issue 7517 – 5 April 2007)

'Gëzim Alpion not only has added another book to the already vast literature on Mother Teresa; he has actually enriched it. So there is no need to read numerous biographies.'

'Here's a paradox of the Albanian culture: Skanderbeg, the national hero of a predominantly Muslim nation, is celebrated in the Western culture as the fighter against the Turks and 'Athleta Christi'. And yet Skanderbeg is not widely known outside Albania. Nowadays, the Albanians use a Catholic nun as their nation's best representative.'

'Alpion ...does not write a biography. Instead he offers an in-depth analysis of the early decades of Mother Teresa's life which have been incorrectly and insufficiently covered in most of the books on her.'

'Gëzim Alpion could not and did not want to answer all the questions about Mother Teresa's life but he has made an outstanding contribution to the contemporary popular culture.'

Dr Michael Schmidt-Neke
Albanische Hefte, Bochum, Germany
(Issue 4, 2006, pp. 25-6)

'Alpion gives us a thorough and well researched look into Mother Teresa's life, including her early years in Skopje, her time with the Loreto order, her painful departure to spearhead the founding of a new order, the Missionaries of Charity, and her rise to world-wide celebrity.'

'Of particular interest ...is the attempt to establish a connection between the death of Mother Teresa's father and her inclination to replace him with a heavenly father figure'.

'Several chapters of *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?* read like a mystery book.'

'Alpion... remains true to his promise neither to glorify nor condemn Mother Teresa.'

'I can't but conclude that after all of his careful research and reasoned probing, Alpion was personally touched by this great woman.'

'Alpion does ask some controversial questions. However, his answers are fair and reasoned from his point of view. True, Alpion neither glorifies nor condemns Mother Teresa. Neither does he come to any conclusions that will dismay or offend a person like myself who thinks that Mother Teresa is both saint and celebrity.'

Dr Margaret Nutting Ralph
Director of a Masters Degree Program for Roman Catholics, Lexington Theological Seminary, New York, USA
Albanian Journal of Politics, Globic Press, Chapel Hill, NC, USA
(Vol. Issue 1, 2007, pp. 86-89)