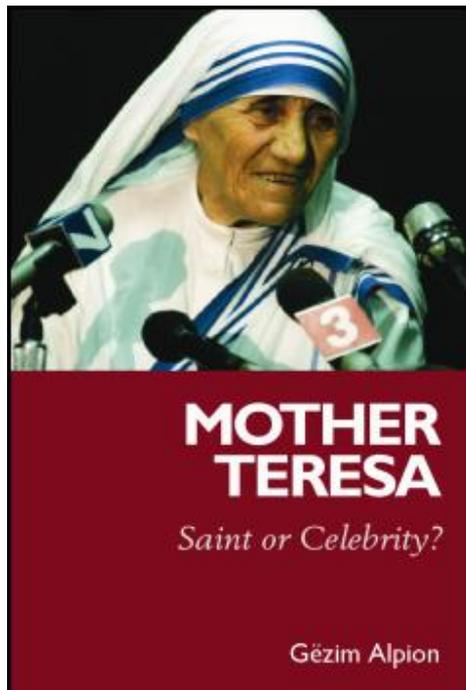


University of Birmingham Press Release

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Was 'Mother Teresa – Saint or Celebrity'?



Mother Teresa was dramatically influenced by events during her formative years, rather than the proclaimed 'call from God'.

University of Birmingham Sociology and Media Studies lecturer Dr Gëzim Alpion has written the first academic book to examine in detail the first eighteen years of the life of this religious celebrity, looking into the real motives behind an Albanian teenager's chosen path into a life dedicated to religion.

In *Mother Teresa Saint or Celebrity?* Alpion goes skilfully beneath the surface of history to uncover one of the twentieth century's greatest enigmas. Alpion's motivation for writing the book was to get to know the woman behind the many Mother Teresas we have been presented with over several decades.

Alpion argues that the death of her adored 'celebrity' father at the age of nine, had a very real and profound effect on Agnes Gonxhe Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa's original name). This turning point in Mother Teresa's life determined her career choice and the motives of her charity work.

Alpion reveals how Mother Teresa was a consummate "manipulator" of the media. He draws parallels with and highlights the differences between the nun's devotion to Jesus and our own obsession with celebrity culture, concluding that, '*Celebrity culture is the modern form of religion*'.

In the book – a totally unbiased account which is both an admiration and critical appreciation of Mother Teresa – Dr Alpion identifies some of the difficulties and obstacles she encountered in the late 1940s as she prepared to set up her congregation of the Missionaries of Charity.

Dr Alpion argues that: *'It took the Church quite a while to understand that the visionary Mother Teresa was the perfect "ambadress", in the right place, at the right time. Mother Teresa "secularised" missionary work in post-independence India thus giving Christianity a new lease of life in this predominantly Hindu country.'*

Dr Alpion has spent the last four years travelling, doing research into and lecturing worldwide on Mother Teresa.

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For more information please contact:

- Ms Anna Mitchell, Press Officer on **0121 414 6029**; Mobile **07920 593946**;
E-mail: a.i.mitchell@bham.ac.uk

- Dr Gëzim Alpion on **0121 414 2341**; Mobile: **0787 651 2001**;
E-mail: g.i.alpion@bham.ac.uk