

Mother Teresa: the saint betrayed by her religious colleagues

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Mother Teresa was betrayed by religious colleagues when she confided in them that she did not believe in God, according to new research by a University of Birmingham academic.

Dr Gëzim Alpion, lecturer in Sociology at the University of Birmingham, and a leading academic in Mother Teresa studies, is currently carrying out a study on the Albanian-born nun's spiritual anguish, concentrating on her troubled relationship with God in the last fifty years of her life in light of her private writings, a large part of which was published for the first time in 2007.

"Mother Teresa was betrayed by the people she trusted most," Dr Alpion reveals. "This is not the only betrayal I address in my research. She was one of the most remarkable inquisitive religious personalities of the twentieth century and she was poorly served by religious colleagues who tried in vain to brainwash her with stale arguments when she confided in them that she did not believe in God."

Findings of the research will be published in a new book 'Who Betrayed Mother Teresa? – Faith and Disbelief in Postmodernity', in 2011.

In his previous book 'Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?' (Routledge, 2007; also published in Italian by Salerno Editrice in 2008), Dr Alpion explores the traumatic impact her father's sudden death had on Agnes Gonxhe Bojaxhiu (the nun's original name) when she was 9, and her efforts to replace her biological father with a divine father.

In the new study, Alpion also identifies and analyses some of the reasons for the missionary's insistence to keep quiet about her personal life and especially of her lifetime failed efforts to convince the church to destroy her letters, diaries and written confessions in possession of her spiritual fathers.

Alpion's current research is the first academic study approaching Mother Teresa's wavering faith neither from the point of view of creationists nor from the point of view of evolutionists and atheists.

In this work Alpion refers to the correspondence he has had over the last three years on Mother Teresa's lack of faith with Pope Benedict XVI and several confessors of Mother Teresa.

Dr Alpion will shortly start giving lectures around the world, where, as in the case of his other studies, he intends to introduce his findings to academic audiences interested in the sociology of religion.

"This is probably the most difficult work I will ever write in my life," says Alpion, "I have done a lot of soul-searching since 2003 when I first took a keen interest in Mother Teresa. The lectures will serve as a platform to discuss the validity of my claims before the publication of the book."

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Notes to Editors

1. The government of Kosovo recently announced plans to celebrate Mother Teresa's 100th birthday this December.
2. Dr Gëzim Alpion was the only academic to unreservedly criticize the publication of Mother Teresa's letters.
3. Alpion's other current research projects include 'Orientalism as Moral Cowardice' in which he explores the undermining impact of mass production on small nations' self-esteem and their degradation of their own traditional culture which is an important part of humanity's heritage.
4. Alpion's other publications include: 'Vouchers' (2001), 'Foreigner Complex: Essays and Fiction about Egypt' (2002), 'If Only the Dead Could Listen' (2008), and 'Encounters with Civilizations: From Alexander the Great to Mother Teresa' (2008; 2009).

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