

Was Mother Teresa not so saintly after all? Researchers spark controversy by claiming her care of the sick was 'dubious' and handling of cash 'suspicious'

- Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity and spent much of her life caring for the sick and poor in Calcutta
- But researchers are questioning whether her image is justified

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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Researchers are calling into question the saintly image of Mother Teresa after carrying out research into her life.

Born Agnes Gonxha in Albania, she founded the Missionaries of Charity and spent much of her life in Calcutta, caring for the sick and poor.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and was beatified by the Vatican in 2003, six years after her death - one miracle away from sainthood.

But a number of critics have questioned how much of the image is justified.

Writing in journal *Studies in Religion/Sciences*, Serge Larivie and Genevieve Chenard, say her hallowed reputation does not stand up to scrutiny.

Prof Larivie said: 'While looking for documentation on the phenomenon of altruism for a seminar on ethics, one of us stumbled upon the life and work of one of Catholic Church's most celebrated woman and now part of our collective imagination - Mother Teresa.'

'The description was so ecstatic that it piqued our curiosity and pushed us to research further.'

After studying nearly 300 documents on her life, they concluded that a number of issues surrounded the nun were not taken into account by the Vatican.

These included 'her rather dubious way of caring for the sick, her questionable political contacts, her suspicious management of the enormous sums of money she received, and her overly dogmatic views regarding, in particular, abortion, contraception, and divorce.'

At the time of her death, Mother Teresa had opened 517 missions welcoming the poor and sick in more than 100 countries.

But these missions have been described as 'homes for the dying' by doctors visiting several of these establishments in Calcutta.

Doctors observed a significant lack of hygiene, even unfit conditions, as well as a shortage of actual care, inadequate food, and no painkillers.

But the authors say the problem is not a lack of money, as the foundation created by Mother Teresa has raised hundred of millions of pounds.



Sisters of the Missions of Charity attend the state funeral for Mother Teresa in Calcutta

They also say that following numerous natural disasters in India she offered prayers and medallions of the Virgin Mary but no direct or monetary aid.

But she accepted the Legion of Honour and a grant from the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti, said prof Larivee, and although millions of dollars were transferred to the various bank accounts, most of the accounts were kept secret.

Dr Larivie says: 'Given the parsimonious management of Mother Teresa's works, one may ask where the millions of dollars for the poorest of the poor have gone?'

He says that her image may have been built upon a meeting in 1968 with the BBC's Malcom Muggeridge, an anti-abortion journalist who shared her right-wing Catholic values.

It was his promotion of her which led to her fame, they say.

But whether or not her image is deserved, the authors accept that there are many positives to her reputation.

Dr Larivie said: 'If the extraordinary image of Mother Teresa conveyed in the collective imagination has encouraged humanitarian initiatives that are genuinely engaged with those crushed by poverty, we can only rejoice.'

'It is likely that she has inspired many humanitarian workers whose actions have truly relieved the suffering of the destitute and addressed the causes of poverty and isolation without being extolled by the media.'

'Nevertheless, the media coverage of Mother Teresa could have been a little more rigorous.'