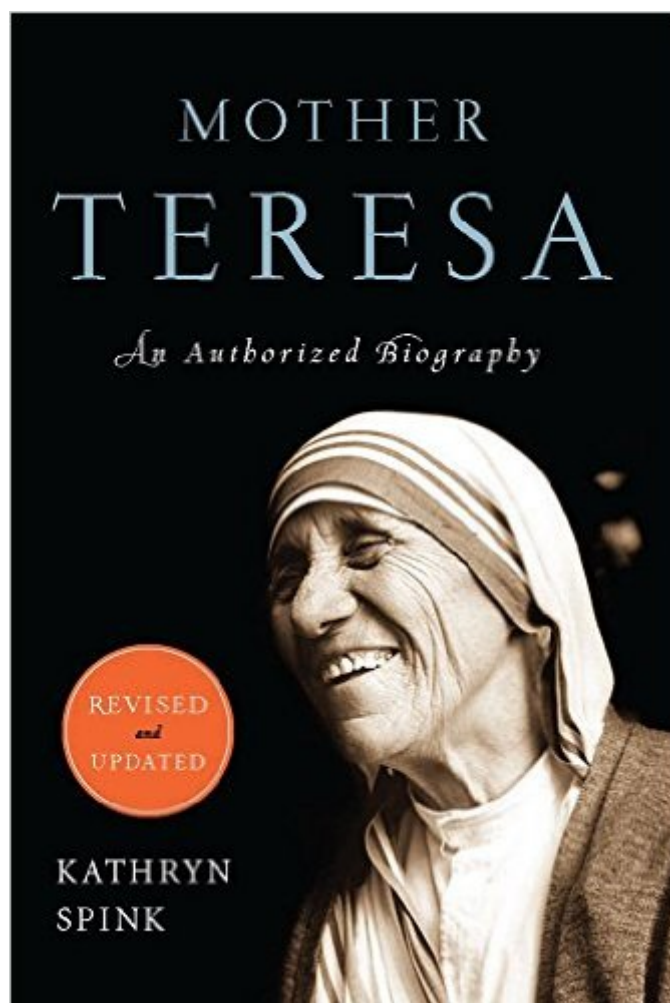


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Mother Teresa (Revised Edition): An Authorized Biography



Synopsis

Many have called her a saint. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and India's highest civilian honor, the Jewel of India, in 1980. Pope John Paul II declared her "Blessed," beatifying her in 2003. For nearly fifty years at the head of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity, the Albanian-born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa, advocated for the poor and homeless, ministered to the sick, provided hospice for the afflicted, and embodied the very essence of humanitarianism. Now, revised and updated, Kathryn Spink's definitive, authorized biography is "simply the best . . . around," according to James Martin, SJ, author of *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*. "Thoroughly researched, sensitively written and unfailingly inspiring, Kathryn Spink's book should be, after Mother Teresa's own writings, your first resource for understanding one of the greatest saints in Christian history."

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Customer Reviews

A life such as Mother Teresa's is deserving of an insightful vibrant and skillfully told biography. I found Kathryn Spink's "Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography" left wanting. It did not live up to the magnitude of Mother Teresa's life of service and giving throughout the world but especially in India's Calcutta in the formation and running of the Sisters of Charity. Spink's "Mother Teresa," reads, at times, like a laundry list of events with no coherent effort made to illuminate the person behind the events. The best biographies I have found don't rely so much on the cold hard history to build a story around, but rather insight as to who the person is and how they interacted with the world. I think of skillfully told biographies in which I walked away from the reading of them

with insight, motivation, and the feeling that I knew the subject and was engaged in their life. Benson's "John Steinbeck: Writer," and Morris "Theodore Rex," come to mind as examples. Spink's "Mother Teresa," does not do the same. I credit the writer for tackling some tough issues in the last two chapters. She addresses criticisms of Mother Teresa and the Sister's of Charity co-workers and does so without sidestepping difficult points of contention. Some social work critics fault the work of Mother Teresa for not wielding her influence to address the root causes of poverty and only tackling the end-product of suffering in a simplistic manner. In addition, Mother Teresa was loyal to the Catholic Church and stood staunch in support of difficult traditional stances espoused by that organization to include pro-life in all cases. Spink's does a good job of pitting Mother Teresa's perspective of service and belief to explain why she did what she did and why she believed as she did.

"During her lifetime, Mother Teresa resisted having her biography written in full...in 1991, she gave Kathryn Spink, who had known Mother Teresa and been involved with her mission for thirteen years, to proceed with a full account of her life...It was also understood that the book would be completed only after Mother Teresa's death." This is part of the text from the inside of the front dust jacket of the book. Few authors received this imprimatur of Mother Teresa. If for no other reason, this reason calls the inquirer of Mother Teresa's "life and views and of the work" (front jacket) to consider the book seriously. It may amaze some Catholics to know that an authorized biographer of Mother Teresa is not a Catholic. Kathryn Spink is a Christian of sorts but not a Catholic. However, she loves the words and work of Mother Teresa and quotes Mother Teresa's opinion of the Missionaries of Charity as the, "most disorganized organization in the world" (Preface, vi). In that quote, it could be said, Mother Teresa was giving, indirectly, an answer to Christopher Hitchens caustic critique of her. It is hard for unbelievers to understand how disorder in the Church is evidence of the order of God--and yet it is, because God can write with broken pens. There are no footnotes, no notes at all. However, there are many quotes that are gems in the thought and work of Mother Teresa including her Nobel Peace Prize Lecture (Appendix B). Some quotes are what Christian readers expect, "I said that even if they helped one person, that was all right. Jesus would have died for one person, for one sinner" (p. 87).

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