

PROUD TO DEFEND MOTHER TERESA—AGAIN

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Sometime in the spring of 2021, I was asked by a distinguished movie production company from the U.K. if I was interested in being interviewed for a documentary they were planning to do on Mother Teresa. I agreed, albeit with reservation.

I agreed because I was honored to be chosen as her number-one defender. I did so with reservation because it begged the question: Why would they want me, unless, of course, the film was going to be a hit job on Mother Teresa? Was I not being used to “balance” the documentary. After all, if the film were a positive portrayal of her, there is no end to the number of persons they could have contacted.

In the end, I knew that if I took a pass, they would simply find someone else. That didn’t sit too well with me—I believe I can defend Mother Teresa better than anyone. Indeed, it was the sole reason I wrote my 2016 book, *Unmasking Mother Teresa’s Critics* (Sophia Institute Press). The timing was deliberate: Mother Teresa was to be canonized on September 4, 2016, and I wanted to get out in front of her critics who might seek to exploit the occasion.

The documentary on Mother Teresa is scheduled to open this March in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany and Italy; it may open in the U.S. this spring, but in what format I do not know. Minnow Films, along with Sky Group Limited, both out of London, are bringing it to the big screen.

When I signed an agreement to do a series of interviews in July, 2021, the film was called, “Mother Teresa: For the Love of God.” The period at the end of the title has now been changed to a question mark. That’s not a coincidence: it was

done to suggest that maybe she had an ulterior motive. Hence, the need to bring me in to defend her.

How will the movie flush out? From what I have learned, the script offers both positive and negative accounts, with a nod to the latter. It is a three-hour series. I have yet to see it, though that will change shortly.

The interview I agreed to do was expected to last a day or two. Surprisingly, it turned out to be more like a week. The young men who did the shooting were extraordinarily cordial—even fun to work with—and very professional. Ditto for the young woman from England whom I conversed with about the project.

What is so controversial about Mother Teresa that she needs a defense? As I pointed out in my book on this saintly woman, her critics are mostly cranks, dabbling in conjecture and innuendo more than substance. Others are manifestly dishonest.

As recently explained to me, the first part deals with her childhood and her time in Calcutta. It explores the wide audience that she garnered, culminating in a Nobel Peace Prize. The next part covers her life in the 1980s. The third part examines her “dark night of the soul,” a period of time when she did not feel God’s presence and her dealings with a rogue financier is cited.

Evidently, I am featured quite often in the documentary. I certainly was given a lot of time to explain my position, and to vigorously rebut the many cruel myths voiced by her critics.

Mother Teresa’s most prominent, and unfair, critic was undoubtedly the late Christopher Hitchens. A video of our storied 2000 debate at the Union League Club in New York City is available online.

Why does anyone hate Mother Teresa? The reasons are varied,

but much of what drives her critics is jealousy, pure jealousy. They are jealous that a diminutive nun was loved the world over for her selfless giving to the dispossessed. What's wrong with that?

Many of her most strident critics were both atheists and socialists (e.g., Hitchens). Her holy status does not sit well with atheists; her ability to serve the poor undermines the goal of socialists.

How so? Everything she did for the needy, the sick and the dying was voluntary, and she inspired countless others to follow in her footsteps. Socialists want the state to mandate programs for the poor, and do not look kindly on religiously motivated initiatives that work better than government welfare policies.

There is one other reason why she is despised. Her critics claim she did not try to conquer poverty. Guilty as charged. Her goal was to comfort the sick and dying in their waning years, not restructure society. Atheists and socialists cannot relate to that. That's their problem. It also shows how shallow they are—they need not have any skin in the game when government distributes goodies to the poor.

How ironic it is that the socialist ideas advocated by her critics have done more to promote poverty than any other policy prescription. More perverse, it was left to people like Mother Teresa to attend to their victims.

I am so happy I was given the opportunity to defend her—again!