

The First International Conference on
The Spiritual Legacy of
Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh
[Духовное наследие митрополита
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In the last three years, two international conferences have taken place on the life and work of Anthony Bloom [AB]. Between 28–30 September 2007, the first conference, “The Spiritual Legacy of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh” took place in Moscow, dedicated to analyzing the life and work of the late metropolitan of Sourozh (1914–2003). The second conference, “God Believes in Man: Man in the Theology of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh,” took place 11–13 September 2009 in Moscow. The following essay is based on materials from the first conference, recently published in Moscow.

AB is one of the most prominent Orthodox personalities of the twentieth century. He influenced not only Eastern Christians but also many others, especially Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Britain, Russia, and North America. He never considered himself a theologian and never wrote a book, but his long record of theological contribution was recognized with the granting of honorary doctorates of divinity from Aberdeen University, Cambridge University, and the Moscow and Kiev Theological Academies.

As of 2007 AB’s bibliography of published talks, sermons, and homilies in many languages includes 440 items. AB lived

most of his life in the West, but Russia, its Church and its people were ever-present in his thoughts, and he was one of the few Orthodox voices who broadcast on radio on both sides of the “iron curtain.” But whether he was in the West or in Russia, with fellow Orthodox Christians or with members of other Churches, his basic theme was always the same: life in Christ. According to his words, he never preached Orthodoxy as such, but Christ, albeit from an implicitly Orthodox point of view.

AB definitely cannot be placed among theologians who do systematic theology “behind a desk” because he understood theology as a practical reality where one encounters the living God. AB never used notes for his homilies, sermons or speeches, and always spoke from the heart. Almost all his published books and articles are the result of recorded and transcribed speeches, homilies, and sermons. Those who met him, either personally or through his books, were convinced that here was a person who not only had encountered Christ and lived his life with Him, but who could transmit this experience to others. The followers of AB continue his work through gathering the archives, publishing books, making documentaries, and organizing conferences.

The overall aim of the Moscow conference was to share the ideas of the late Metropolitan Anthony and to begin to analyze his legacy. This was the first conference on such a large scale, and organizers were aware of the wide legacy of AB, and therefore did not pretend to cover all the major contours of his ideas. Instead, they decided to make initial steps in the direction of a more thorough analysis, beginning with three specific goals:

1. to define the teaching of AB;
2. to define how this teaching was realized in the life and work of AB;
3. to understand how AB’s followers can continue his teaching.

Most of the speakers knew AB personally and shared their experiences of meeting him. On the one hand, this personal