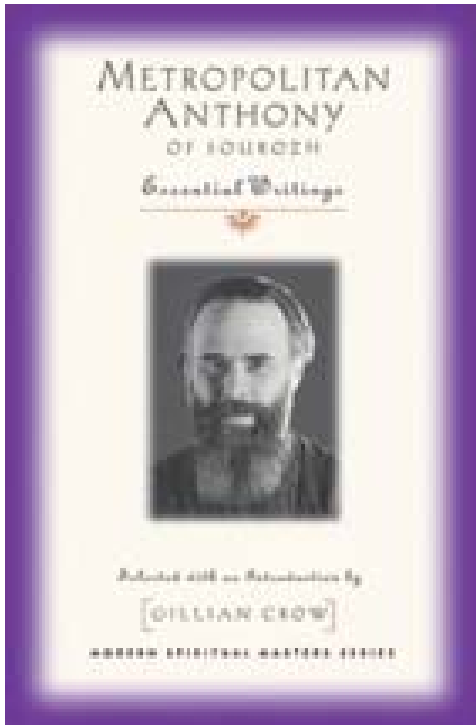


Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, *Essential Writings: Modern Spiritual Masters*, Selected with an Introduction by Gillian Crow, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010, 189 pp. ISBN-10: 1570758662. ISBN-13: 978-1570758669.



*By Fr. Mirone Klysh*

This book is part of a great series of works “which introduced the writings and vision of some of the great spiritual masters of the twentieth century.” Included in the series are, among many others, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Merton, Mother Teresa, Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Maria Skobtsova, Albert Schweitzer, Leo Tolstoy, John XXIII, the Dalai Lama, and Jean Vanier.

In the “Introduction,” Gillian Crow, who was the Diocesan Secretary for Metropolitan Anthony during the last ten years of his life, presents an understanding of why he is included in this series of “modern spiritual masters,” and “guides and companions to a new generation of seekers.” It is based on her biography, *This Holy Man*, published in 2005.

The life of Metropolitan Anthony could be summed up as going from “material wealth to rags to spiritual treasure.” He was born André Borisovich Bloom on June 19 1914, in Switzerland, son of a Russian

imperial diplomat. However, with the fall of the Russian Empire to communism, the family became a subject to a life of poverty in Paris, France. This dramatic transformation in lifestyle changed the young André from being religious to anti-religious. At the age of fifteen; however, he had a religious experience, which resulted in his becoming a fervent Orthodox believer to the end of his life. As a member of the Russian Student Youth Movement, André was encouraged to read one of the Gospels. He reluctantly, chose to read the Gospel of St. Mark, because it is the shortest. While reading the account of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, he "suddenly felt that there, at the other side of the table, stood Christ."

André Bloom was to suffer a setback; however, when his application for theological studies was not accepted at St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris. Being rejected by the seminary, he trained to become a doctor, and served in the French Army medical corps during the Second World War.

André Borisovich began his spiritual journey in 1943, when he was secretly tonsured a monk. In keeping with monastic tradition, he was given a new name, Anthony, thereby retaining the first letter of his pre-monastic name. After the war, in 1948, he was ordained a priest. Shortly thereafter, Father Anthony moved to London to work for the Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius.

The editor of this volume states, without much elaboration, that Fr. Anthony became a Bishop in 1957. This date; however, contradicts the date given as 1958 in *Meditations on a Theme* and *School for Prayer*, both authored by Metropolitan Anthony. Four years after becoming a bishop, he was elevated to Archbishop. In 1966, Archbishop Anthony was given the title of Metropolitan of Sourozh, which geographically is in Crimea, Ukraine, but he did remain in London, UK. Metropolitan Anthony died of cancer on August 4, 2003.

In addition to the question of the date of the episcopal consecration of Anthony Bloom, the biography raises an academic question with regard to the 'writings' by the Metropolitan. Gillian Crow points out that "... he [Metropolitan Anthony] wrote no books himself. He left it to others to gather up his words and get them into print" (p. 27). Further, she states that the transcribers corrected his "Anthonian English," implying that Metropolitan's English was, perhaps, not as good as his French or Russian. The previously published books by Metropolitan Anthony available to this reviewer, *Living Prayer*, *School for Prayer*, and *Meditation on a Theme*, make no mention of this fact. The title of the current book, *Essential Writings*, also implied that the text collected in the volume was, indeed, physically written by Metropolitan. It is regrettable that no comparison is possible between the actual writings by Metropolitan Anthony, and their transcribed versions, so that one could fully appreciate his vision, and flavour of his thought, even if they were communicated in a peculiar form of English.

Be that as it may, Gillian Crow divides the selections into six sections: 1. Faith in the Gospel, 2. Creation, 3. Prayer, 4. Orthodox Spirituality, 5. The Church, and 6. Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. Taking into consideration that Metropolitan Anthony was active for forty years as a preacher, and as a broadcaster on radio, and television, the selection process from his notes for the current volume must have been very difficult. To the credit of the editor, enough background information is presented that helps a less initiated reader to better understand the reason of reasons behind the particular selections.

Following is a selection of quotes from the Hierarch that provide some insight into his vision and spirituality:

"It seems to me... that spirituality consists of what is inspired in us by the Holy Spirit... [it] is the expression of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in a person" (p. 121).

"The Liturgy is a school for spirituality" (p. 113).

"... a miracle happens only if we believe that the law depends not on the power, but on the love of God" (p. 115).

"We must remember that the fruits of prayer are... a deep change in the whole of our personality" (p. 98).

"The Church is a society of love" (p. 138).

"Tradition is the living memory of almost two thousand years of Christianity, living and kept alive by the action and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and made solid, unshakable by the world and person of Christ" (p. 152).

"It is not enough to be granted forgiveness; we must be prepared to receive it, to accept it" (pp. 162-163).

"His call to take up our cross and follow Him is a call, at the same time, to accept being true disciples of him, and also to do it in the certainty that He will never ask from us what He has not done and endured Himself" (p, 169).

"We must enter into Holy Week as though we are participants in the events, indeed, read of them, but then mix in the crowd that surrounds Christ..." (p. 172).

"It is only because of the Resurrection that one can recognize the Son of God in Him who died on the cross" (p. 176).

For those who are new to spiritual messages of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, this book will provide with a spiritual appetite for more. For those who are familiar with his vision, this book will renew their vision of this spiritual master.

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