

BALAAM'S ASS

or

A Sinner's Thoughts (Part One)

by

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“And God opened the mouth of the ass,
and it spake to Balaam.”

(cf. Numbers 22:28)

Just as the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, so did He open the mouth of me, the sinner and unworthy one.

- No book is as simple and clear as the Gospel. Despite this, no book can be explained so perversely as the Gospel, on account of the craftiness of the human heart.
- I have four or five printed Gospels; yet whenever I find another one, I want to acquire it. I love it so much that I feel I am acquiring it for the first time every time I find one.
- The man who has felt within himself a longing to be poor is the man who has drawn near to Christ.
- The more we find within ourselves gratitude for our existence and want to express our thanksgiving for it, the more we approach Christ's faith. We want to weep, we want to forgive wicked people, and we want to show gratitude even for those things that had previously seemed evil to us.
- Just as the “god” of those who say that they believe, but who are far from Christ, is a false idol, so too is their love a false idol. As is their faith, so is their love.

¹Selections translated by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston from the periodical *Kivotós* (in Greek), Athens, June 1952, p. 236.

- My soul finds rest as I look upon the holy icons painted according to our Orthodox Christian tradition. It is as though I were reading the holy Gospel. This art is a source of healing for the eyes.
- “The Kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). The Kingdom of God is gained through struggle, with affliction and hard effort against our body, especially against our spirit — that is, our egotism and opinions.
- The humble manger in which Christ was born is the humble heart into which He can enter and “make His abode.” He is never born in vain palaces.
- Christianity is simplicity of mind.
- Whoever has faith in God as a match, and poverty and humility as tinderwood, will be able to ignite the spiritual fire.
- The fewer words a Christian speaks, the more he learns; the fewer things he examines, the more he is enlightened.
- As far as I understand — now that the Lord has counted me worthy to become poor — the greatest enemy of man’s true freedom is bodily prosperity.

