



PERGAMOS.

what they call martyrs of them, but tempt them to do what their religion forbids them to do."

Such was the deadly plan acted upon. Already it had begun to do what the death of Antipas and all their martyrs had failed to accomplish. It had already begun to corrupt the Christians of Pergamos. "I have a few things against thee," says the Saviour in his message to them through their Bishop, "because thou hast those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (who were probably much the same as the Balaamites), which thing I hate."

And here we touch the lesson which the Church of Pergamos is intended to give all churches and people for all time. Were the question asked of many people, "What is it that stands in the way of your being a sincere and true Christian. What prevents you, for instance, from being a communicant?"—the answer might well be given, "Is it not the continued fight that you have to lead a pure life to live up to the requirements of your religion?" Such people have no difficulty as to the doctrines of our faith or practices of our service. There they are all right. They have not much to tempt them there. If their life was as pure as their faith they would doubtless be all right. But it is this continued attack that is made upon them by those who are false to Christianity, or else care nothing about it and who are unscrupulous as to their morality, it is this which brings the trouble. Men tempt them to tricks of trade and manoeuvres in business; to sensual indulgence; to too free a use of appetite. It is all drawing them in the one direction, an

undermining of morals. Is this so? Is not the constant ignoring of the highest ordinance of the Church by so many of our leading church people and others an indication that it is? They are honestly conscious that the true standard of Christian morality is not lived up to by them. How careful should we be of our friends; "Know ye not that the friendship of God is enmity with the world?" Let us be careful that while we are ready (or think we are), to go to the stake and yield our life in defence of the Christian faith; we are not gliding into the wicked net spread for us by the seductive plan of Balaam.

There are a few texts to which all Christians should try to give practical force in their lives. They are such as these: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate; touch not the

unclean thing, and I will receive you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

But a word or two more must be said with regard to this message of Christ to the struggling Christians of Pergamos.

There is a sudden and quick call made upon them to repent or else endure the displeasure of their Lord. It is this: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth."

To each one of the Churches so far the Saviour had designated Himself in a different way; but to Pergamos He is the one that "hath the sharp sword with two edges." Sin that is not repented of must end in wrath; there is no other teaching for us than that. If the Saviour is all love to those who are His, He will be all woe to those who join hands with impurity and sins; which (in the expressive language of this message), are things which He hates.

But there is also a promise to consider. The reward is to be given, as in the case of the other Churches, to him that overcometh. In this case it is to him that overcometh the sinful desires of the flesh. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Manna was what sustained the Israelites in the wilderness. It was every thing to them; the only thing in the shape of food which sustained their life. Our Manna is Christ. This he specially tells us himself "I am the true Bread which came down from Heaven." In some sense He is hidden now, but we believe He will yet be revealed. We shall know the Lord when our time of life in this world is ended. Better will that feast be, which is called the marriage supper of the Lamb, than all the orgies and sensual banquets that were ever invented.