

said many beautiful and pious things. True also, he seemed to pay deference to the will of God, but that only makes him all the worse. Let us briefly recall his history. The children of Israel, in their wanderings in the desert, had come to the territories of Balak, King of Moab. That king, in some respects, was a sagacious monarch. He had a superstitious feeling about the children of Israel. He found out what their religion was, and seemed to feel that he could not conquer them unless he could get someone who professed the same religion as they did to curse them. It happened that a man professing this religion, the religion of Jehovah, lived at no great distance from him. His name was Balaam. Into the peculiarity of Balaam's position we need not here enter; but we may say that he certainly had a correct knowledge of Jehovah the God of Israel, whom we worship to-day. He went to Balak, but he was candid enough to tell him that he could not curse people whom the Lord had blessed; that he could not say a word less or more than what the Lord should command. This was all well enough. He blessed the children of Israel instead of cursing them; but then, before he left Balak, he shewed him a plan by which the people could be made to curse themselves. This was Balaam's sin and it was a dreadful one, both as to its heinousness and its wretched consequences. This, in fact, was his advice to Balak: "You have here in your midst the opportunity of ruining the Israelites if you will only use it; you need not fight against them, nor seek to have them cursed by the powerless words of man; all you need do is to let them live here beside you for a time and cultivate their acquaintance in a friendly way; make parties for them; entertain them; bring them into your temples, let them see the peculiarities of your religion, and the beauty of your women,"—in short, Balaam's advice was this: "Do all you can to corrupt those people, both as to their religion and their morals, and the result will be all right for you." This advice we know from the Book of Numbers was only too successful. The way to evil is so easy, the power to resist insidious temptations is so feeble, that hundreds and hundreds of God's people were soon found bowing their heads in the temple of an idol, and yielding to the unrighteous practices which the ceremonies of that temple allowed. The result was great disaster to Israel. Twenty-four thousand of the people perished by the hand of God. The camp was a scene of mourning and of death, because of the crimes of the people.

But in one thing Balaam was mistaken. His infamous plan did not bring the children of Israel under the power of the King of Moab. Those of them who were true to their God were aroused to such a spirit of indignation and fury, that they fought the Moabites till they destroyed them. The body of Balaam was found among

the slain. Confident that his plan would succeed he had joined the army of the King of Moab, and there he and his fiendish plot perished together.

And this was the evil that was threatening the Church in Pergamos. For some reason the heathen world was determined to crush Christianity. We know all the power that is meant in the expression: "Nip a thing in its bud," and whatever the reason was, whether it was that the wise heads who were opposed to it saw a power in it for good, which in the end would prove a destruction to their sensual pleasures, or what it was, there was a huge effort made to nip Christianity in its bud. To accomplish this purpose two evident methods were adopted. The first was persecution, violence. "Stamp it out; kill, burn, fire, slay; fight them, destroy them." This had been tried at Pergamos, and the Christians had come out of the trial with flying colours. The devotes, who sat round Satan's seat or throne (who ever they were), swooped down upon the Christian with fire and fagot, sword and wild beast, to destroy. It was then that Antipas, mentioned in the message we are considering, was killed. Of him we know nothing except what is told us here. The Saviour claims him as his own, the first martyr of the Christian Church, but of his life we know nothing. But tenderly does the Saviour speak of him here, "Antipas, (he calls him by name), Antipas, my faithful martyr who was slain in Pergamos, the dwelling place of Satan!" The Church was destined in the future to witness many a martyr; Smyrna was to have its Polycarp; Lyons its Ignatius, but Pergamos had already had its Antipas when the Saviour sent this message. His blood had already been shed.

Now, in all this fiery trial the Christians of Pergamos stood firm, and for this there is the Saviour's gracious praise to them through their Angel or Bishop. "Thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

This then was one method of trying to nip Christianity in the bud; but it never succeeded. One martyr made perhaps twenty Christians. But then there was a second method employed for this purpose which was often far more successful than violence. It was the very plan that Balaam had suggested to Balak in order to ruin the children of Israel. The Balaam of Pergamos said, "Let the Christians alone; act a little more wisely in this matter and you will soon make them destroy themselves; cultivate their acquaintance in a friendly way; make parties for them; entertain them, let them see the easy, seductive habits of your own temple; try everything, the beauty of your women, the tempting power of your liquors; let it work quietly and underhandedly and you will do far more than violence will ever do. Don't make