

ELECTION VS. FREE GRACE.

REV. DR. PATTON OPPOSES UNION.

THE Rev. Dr. Francis L. Patton, Presbyterian, President of the Princeton Theological Seminary, preached in Pittsburg recently in the Third Presbyterian Church to a congregation crowding the church, made up of representative ministers and laymen from all parts of the two cities. As was expected, he opened the active campaign against union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. [R3489 : page 22]

Dr. Patton preached from the words, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." He said:--

A SENSATIONAL SERMON.

"The minister is the attorney general of God Almighty, charged with the commission of presenting the claims of eternal truth in relation to the common things of life. He holds a brief for the supernatural. Some say that a minister must not touch secular things. I do not agree with them. It is his business to do what he can to bring men in their every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ. 'What is truth?' asked jesting Pilate, and he did not wait for an answer. If he had waited until today he would have got the answer from Chicago or from Oxford--'Any old thing is truth that works, that satisfies, that meets the exigency.' They say, 'You can convince a man if he will only be respectable and listen.' But he does not listen. If you cannot convince the one obstinate man in a jury, what is your argument worth? If Kruger could only have foreseen, do you think he would have declared war? If the Church of Scotland could have foreseen the action of the house of lords, do you think they would have gone into the union?"

BAD CONSCIENCE A BLIND GUIDE.

"The worst thing that can happen to a man is to have a bad conscience. It is a blind guide leading him astray. Our Lord says we are the light of the world. If the world is ever to have a high ideal it must get it from the church. If men are ever to be lifted above the level of selfish desires, it is when they come into the house of God. The church has become corrupt in times past, and why not again? The rank and file think very much as their leaders. We are a gregarious people and go like a flock of sheep, men and women alike, and when the church follows blind guides, and the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch. You and I belong to the Presbyterian church, a great church with a great history--great moral and missionary history--a history which has marked the progress of this continent.

BEFORE "HIGHER CRITICISM."

"In 1789, when the general assembly was formed, there was no geology upon which to found attacks on the creation, no archaeology to upset early records, no higher criticism, no biology to attack statements as to the Garden of Eden, no sociology to make up a little sentiment to take the place of the old gospel. I often wonder how the old preachers got along when they had no telegraph wires nor wireless telegraph, when wars were fought and ended before they heard of them, and they had nothing to preach but the old fundamental gospel of Jesus Christ. But I had rather preach today with its magnificent opportunities when we stand face to face with great problems. There was a division in '37 on psychological lines, but the gravitating influence of good fellowship brought us together in 1870.

UNIONS WITHOUT FAITH.

"This movement for union goes on and people are making less of doctrine than polity, and they say, what is the difference, if we can come together. And the movement is for union, not with a Calvinistic body--not at all--but with an Arminian body. They say there is not enough difference between this Calvinistic confession of yours and that Arminian confession to keep the two bodies apart, and they say, 'Come together and disregard the difference, and unite on the basis of evangelical faith.' When this comes about how much broader do you want to be?"

CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM INCOMPATIBLE.

"You are morally committed to a polity that will embrace Arminianism. Great movements are going on--don't you forget it. I know what I am talking about. We are in danger of great defections in the Methodist church, in the Episcopal church, in the Congregational church, in the Baptist church and in the Presbyterian church--don't you forget it.

"We have the hard proposition--on the one side old-fashioned prayer-meeting, monthly concert, Sabbath observance religion, and on the other side out-and-out unmitigated rationalism. Men are saying this old-fashioned religion is what they want, and must hold on to, but there are intellectual difficulties, and they fear the stress and struggle and say, 'We will take the middle of the road.'

SEES THE CRISIS.

"When the great defection comes in all the churches, out of this storm and struggle a new church may arise. Before we go much further the time may [R3490 : page 22] come when the remnants of the faithful will come out and reorganize. When you get down to mere emotional subjectivity I will come around some Monday morning and ask you to let me have that subjectivity and send it off to have it analyzed by some professor of psychology, and I think you will not like to see the color of it.

"In the nation the rank and file follow the lead of the ministers, professors, editors, and if you tell what these say I will make a confession of faith. What the rich do the poor feel they have a right to do. The hope of the nation is not in big armies, big navies, new markets, but in righteousness.

"Darkness is bad enough, but blindness is far worse. What is needed is conscience in the individual, in the church and in the nation."--*Pittsburg Gazette*.

* * *

Dr. Patton is a theologian and sees, as many do not see, that Calvinistic theology and Arminian theology take opposite sides and are mortal foes to each other. Peace prevails for some years and neither denounces and shows up the other, but it is only for a time; the differences can never be ignored without the sacrifice of every distinctive theological principle and dogma. Nevertheless, the masses will not grasp the theological distinctions, because not taught theology in recent years; and because, for fear of a "theological war" such as formerly prevailed, Dr. Patton and others dare not speak out plainly their view of [R3490 : page 23] matters. For instance, the pith of the foregoing would scarcely be discerned by many of our readers without our added sub-headings.

Would that Doctor Patton could see with us the divine plan of the ages, in which both Election and Free Grace have their places. From that standpoint full and absolute union on the basis of the Truth would be a simple matter.

=====