

# The Independent

Published Weekly

VOL. LII NEW YORK, THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1900 No. 2697

## Survey of the World.

### The Election in North Carolina

Returns from the election in North Carolina on the 2d inst. show a majority of nearly 60,000 for the Democratic State ticket, and 58,000 for the constitutional amendment that disfranchises the negroes. Three-fourths of the members of the new legislature, which will elect the successor of Senator Marion Butler, Populist, are Democrats. The amendment will become effective on July 1st, 1902. It disfranchises more than 80,000 negroes who are now entitled to vote, but the illiterate white men are excepted from the operation of it by the provision that the descendants of men who were entitled to vote in any State in 1867 shall not be affected by the requirement that voters must be able to read. On election day the negroes generally remained away from the polls; very few of them had been permitted to register. A Democratic journal says that in New Hanover County (which includes the city of Wilmington) only five negroes voted and only two votes against the amendment were cast. There are several thousand negroes lawfully entitled to vote in that county. During the last days of the campaign the activity of the Red Shirt rifle clubs and of other Democratic organizations engaged in intimidating the negroes and in suppressing free speech was not relaxed. White Republicans and Populists were prevented by force from addressing public meetings. Senator Butler did not undertake to speak in the towns where his engagements had been made. His friends believed that his life was in danger. Bands of Red Shirt riflemen searched railway

trains on which he was reported to have taken passage. Prominent Democrats repeatedly declared that he ought to be driven out of the State. After the election, Mr. Simmons, chairman of the Democratic Committee, who will be Butler's successor in the Senate, said in a published statement that the campaign had been "one of education;" that "the object of the Red Shirt clubs" had been "pacific;" that the negroes had not registered because they took "no interest in the campaign" (altho the election was to decide whether they should be disfranchised); and that many negroes thought that the amendment ought to be adopted. It will be observed that the negroes will have a right to register and vote at the Presidential election in November. On the 4th inst. the canvassing board of Pamlico County, sitting in the Court House at Bayboro, was threatened by a mob of Fusionists. The Governor ordered the Newbern Naval Reserves to preserve order there, and the mob dispersed.

### Cuba's Constitutional Convention

The order for an election of delegates to a constitutional convention has been issued. In the preamble is recited the joint resolution of Congress concerning the purpose of the United States "to leave the government and control of the island to its people." Reference to the recent municipal elections is made, and it is said that the Cubans "are now ready in like manner to proceed to the establishment of a general government which shall assume

taken possession of the Powers, in that it is the result of his study of China which has been brought to the notice of the different nations through their capitalists.

The merchant class is the creator, advocate and fosterer of the "open-door" policy, upon the maintenance of which the United States should be firmly insistent. Not only the missionary but the promoter should stick close in his work to this latter class, as this class constitutes the saving element in the whole

present Chinese situation, having at its back the substantial commercial interests of China.

As for the official, while he may not favor the missionary being so far afield, or view with complacency the sweeping demands of the promoter, it is his duty to see that these two classes as well as the merchant are allowed freedom to act and work within prescribed treaty limits and to protect them in the exercise of these rights.

NEW YORK CITY.

## The Revision Movement in the Presbyterian Church.

By Benjamin B. Warfield, D D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY IN PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

**T**HERE is a paragraph in THE INDEPENDENT for the Fourth of July headed "Presbyterian Questions" (p. 1584). Its object is to inform the readers of THE INDEPENDENT of the progress of the debate going on in the Presbyterian papers concerning the proposed revising of the Westminster Confession. Its core consists of the following sentences:

"One singular fact appears, however. No one, not even the most rigidly conservative, fails to see some serious defects in the form of statement of the Confession. All admit that it would be advantageous if some misapprehensions in regard to the Confession were removed. The difficulty seems to be that they do not see how they can be removed, at any rate just now, without also doing much harm."

The general drift of this passage seems to be plain enough. What THE INDEPENDENT seems to wish to say to its readers is that it is universally conceded in Presbyterian circles that the Confession is seriously in need of revision, but it is felt that grave dangers attend the process, and men are hesitating whether, on the whole, it were not best, at least at present, to refuse to undertake the task.

If this were presented merely as a kind of rough composite photograph of the Presbyterian situation it might call for little remark. There are, no doubt, men in the Presbyterian Church who discover "serious defects in the form of state-

ment"—or even perhaps in the things stated—in the Confession. And surely there are few who do not keenly realize that this is no time, and that the circumstances in which we stand afford no proper opportunity, for undertaking a revision of the Confession. In taking a general view of the Church from the outside it may be easy to get one of these views superposed on the other—with an odd composite effect. But THE INDEPENDENT does not present its statement merely as a composite photograph of the Presbyterian situation. It universalizes it, and insists on its being taken as a true portrait of each individual in the Presbyterian Church. "*No one, not even the most rigidly conservative,*" it says, "fails to see some serious defects in the form of statement of the Confession."

Now, this is a grave mistake. There are not only many, but I think the great majority of Presbyterians, who fail utterly to see "serious defects" in the Confession. I am myself one of this class. And I for myself and the multitudes who think with me, would like to have it recognized that the chief reason why we do not wish the Confession of faith revised is not because we believe the times inopportune (tho we do believe the times to be very inopportune) and not because we believe the present attempt to better the document dangerous

to the peace of the Church and its good confession (tho we do believe it to be dangerous both to the one and to the other), but because we believe the Confessional statements against which the present movement is primarily directed to be the truth of God, and to be expressed in the Confession in an admirable and thoroughly acceptable manner, and because we do not wish this admirable statement of the truth of God to be marred. It is positive faith in these declarations as part of the precious truth of the Gospel, not the opportunism of policy, that animates me, at least, in this matter; and I am persuaded the same is true of the majority of those who draw back from the present demand for revision of the Confession.

I am, of course, on the other hand, to be counted among those "who admit that it would be advantageous if some misapprehensions in regard to the Confession were removed." I perceive very clearly that there are abroad many "misapprehensions in regard to the Confession." I have a very deep, and, as it seems to me, very well grounded conviction that the present agitation for a revision of the Confession has its roots set very largely in these misapprehensions. And it is therefore, in part, that I feel very strongly that the right way to meet this agitation is not to revise the Confession, but to correct the misapprehensions that have taken hold of men's minds in regard to it, and which many seem to make it their business to foster and to increase. I am ready to do anything I can to remove these misapprehensions. I am ready to teach, expound, exhort, to protest and to reiterate—in short, to use any instrumentality open to me to reach the misapprehending minds and to correct their misapprehensions. Misapprehension is obviously a condition of the subject misapprehending, not of the object misapprehended: *ex vi termini* the object is all right—it is the subject which needs correcting. And THE INDEPENDENT here has really uncovered the root of the whole difficulty. Men have "misapprehended" the Confession, and cry at once: "Change the Confession." I reply: It were more logical and satisfactory to change rather the misapprehension. The remedy in such a case is a better apprehension, not an altered Confession—

especially if it is to be altered by those who misapprehend it and whose faculty of apprehension is thus exposed as a not very trustworthy instrument.

And now will THE INDEPENDENT kindly observe the inconsequence of its statements? It begins by affirming—mistakenly, as I have pointed out—that all Presbyterians concede serious defects to exist in the Confession. It proceeds by affirming—rightly assuredly, but not very consequentially—that all are agreed that it were well to correct current misapprehensions concerning the Confession. It ends by affirming—strangely enough, and most inconsequentially—that it is difficult to see how these misapprehensions can be removed without doing harm. I protest that I do not, for myself, understand what harm can be done by removing all the misapprehensions that exist concerning the Confession. Difficult it may be; for men's minds have sometimes an odd way of hardening in their misapprehensions. And sometimes it may even be that the misapprehension has a deeper root than inadvertence and is really the outgrowth of a radical disagreement with even dislike of the Confessional statement—something very like hatred of the truth all too plainly stated there. But surely the removal of misapprehension from any mind is a purely beneficent act, and can fruit into nothing but good. If all the misapprehensions in men's minds—as to the Confession, and as to God, and his plans and ways with men—could be removed, I am persuaded that this one good thing at least would result: men would cease to rail at the Westminster Confession, and would rather flock to it and confess it to be, as it certainly is in these very portions now most frequently scouted, the very truth of God, the pure transcript of his revealed word. Let the misapprehensions be removed, then, by all means. And let the Confession stand bearing witness still to the truth. And certainly do not let us argue that because misapprehensions are abroad concerning the Confession, therefore we should amend the Confession, unless, indeed, we think the removal of the misapprehensions likely to produce harm!

The gross confusion of this argumentation is worth thus dwelling upon because it is not accidental, but is typical

of the whole discussion now in progress. What we are being actually urged to do is to amend the Confession because it is misapprehended! There are few in the Presbyterian Church who are willing to say that the Confession needs revising because its doctrinal system is wrong. That is left to outsiders like *THE INDEPENDENT* and *The Outlook*—who not unnaturally would like to see the Presbyterian Church assimilate (some of us would rather say, dilute) its faith to their own. There are scarcely more who can bring themselves to say that the Confession needs revising because some of its doctrines are wrong. We do indeed occasionally hear of the "supralapsarianism" of the third and fourth sections of the Third Chapter; but in the light of the history of the formation of this chapter—nay, in the light of the simple wording of it itself—this characterization is so obviously absurd that it is left to a few over-eager controversialists who would fain damn with a misapplied epithet what they cannot find intrinsic grounds to condemn. It is much more common, therefore, to hear it said that the Confession needs revising because the form of its statements or the language in which it states doctrines true in themselves and to be retained in the proposed new statements, is needlessly provocative of misapprehension and lays the faith of the Church open to undeserved reprobation. This sounds very well in general assertion and might serve excellently as a battle cry, did it not hopelessly break down when examples are asked for. Whenever the forms of statement of the Confession are adduced, they discover themselves to be on the contrary specially precise, restrained and prudent—absolutely incapable of misapprehension when read simply and in the light of their context. Even this plea is therefore comparatively rarely urged, and what we commonly get is nothing but a general declaration that the Confession needs revision because it is misapprehended—or, as it seems to me, it would be truer to phrase it, because it is misrepresented. As if it were possible so to state truth that those to whom it is distasteful could not possibly caricature and misrepresent it. As if it were right to make the wishes of men instead of the revelation of God the norm of our statement of truth. As if it were desirable so

to state truth that those who do not believe it may be deceived into accepting it. As if when bad boys will not learn it is always on the teacher's back that the scourge should be laid—teach he never so wisely. For my part, I think the correction should be visited on those who are in fault.

The amusement which this confused argumentation is certainly well fitted to arouse, it must be confessed, is somewhat dashed by the portentous nature of its effects. It has played into the hands of the small body of non-Calvinists among us, who do not like the Confession of Faith just because it is Calvinistic, and who desire its Calvinism eliminated or at least emasculated. To them it has brought the aid of a much larger body who have been misled into fancying that they can so state Calvinism as not to be offensive to the anti-Calvinistic consciousness, and that it is a good thing to undertake so to state the Calvinism of the Confession that no Arminian can manage to object to it. Thus a soundly Calvinistic Church is actually to de-Calvinize its Confession—in order that it may no longer be possible for the Arminian, or Pelagian, or "Modern," or what not, to "misapprehend" it! Surely nothing more absurd was ever presented to the contemplation of men. And yet this is precisely the situation that now confronts the Presbyterian Church. The nerve of the present movement for the revision of the Confession of Faith lies in dislike to the Calvinistic conception of the Gospel. It is no new thing for this Gospel to be "misapprehended," misrepresented, vilified—let it be stated ever so wisely. But the popularity of the movement in the Church is due to the covering up of this clear issue under a professed purpose of only more genially or more prudently stating Calvinism.

Those who have been drawn into the movement on this understanding have entered it with entire honesty of purpose; but they are none the less thoroughly misled, and are destined to a rude awakening after a while if they do not react from their compromising position in time to save themselves from the impending disaster. Calvinism is incapable of a more prudent or a more genial statement than that which is given it in the Westminster Confession—which is

a model of careful and winning expression of generic Calvinism in its most comprehensive and most scriptural form. The offense of its statements consists not in their liability to misunderstanding, but rather in their simple lucidity, which renders it scarcely possible to misunderstand them. Those who most object to them object to them at bottom for this very reason. They want a statement of Calvinism which is not quite so clear and simple; they want a statement of Calvinism which they can manage somehow to misunderstand—which the Arminianizer, or even the Arminian himself, can somehow manage to accept.

Now, for my part, I do not in the least object to the brethren who wish such a "comprehensive" statement of faith making one for themselves. But I say emphatically: Let it be *for themselves*. I certainly do not wish them to make such a statement *for me*. I am not a lover of ambiguous statements of belief. I like my Calvinism pure, because I think that Calvinism is the pure truth of God. And I certainly do not wish them to make such a statement *for the great Presbyterian Church*, which has known, and in all its length and breadth still knows, a better way. And above all, I am disinclined to see a great historical document like the Westminster Confession—which stands out among other Confessional statements just because of the purity and clearness and prudence and geniality and completeness and beauty with which it brings to expression the great evangelical system of truth which men call Calvinism but which God has published as his Gospel—marred and mauled and battered and diluted, because, forsooth, it is "misapprehended." Of course it is "misapprehended," and it will be "misapprehended" till the end of time. The remedy for its "misapprehension" is not to abandon it or to water it, but to expound, explain, commend it—with all long suffering, indeed, but with full purpose of instruction in righteousness.

The fact of the matter is that the real issue that is raised in this whole revision movement is the old issue of Calvinism. Let it be veiled as it may, until it de-

ceives the very elect, the real issue brought before the Presbyterian Church is whether it purposes to remain faithful to that pure evangelicalism called Calvinism, for the Confession of which the fathers did not scruple to give their blood, but which their sons seem to fancy now they can so state that the world can find nothing to hate or "misapprehend" in it. It is because some of us see this clearly, that we will have none of the present revision movement. And I call on my fellow Presbyterians, who are Presbyterians, not in name only, but in reality and in deed—who are Calvinists, and who have no taste for expressing their Calvinism in such a fashion that it may be fairly doubted whether it is Calvinism that is expressed—to come forward in their Presbyteries this autumn and say so frankly. Let us say once and for all: "We believe the system of doctrine expressed in the Confession to be the truth of God, revealed for the salvation of the world. We believe this system of doctrine to be adequately expressed in this Confession—to be expressed in it indeed with singular precision, prudence, purity and force. It is our fathers' Confession of Faith. It is our Confession of Faith. We have solemnly proclaimed it such before God and men. We solemnly proclaim it such now afresh. And we shall forever defend it as such against all of its assailants. We refuse to abandon it at the demand of those who do not, like us, believe it. We refuse to adjust its modes of statement to wavering faith or lassitude in defense. We refuse to permit it longer to be disparaged in the house of its friends. We reaffirm it as the confession of our faith, heartily accepted as such, and we heartily commend it to the world as the best human compend of the pure gospel of the grace of God yet given to man."

That is what I believe. That is what I am confident that the Presbyterian Church in its length and breadth believes. I hope that is what the Presbyterian Church will say afresh in an unambiguous way this autumn.

PRINCETON, N. J.