

**A REPLY TO DR. MILLER'S LETTER  
TO A GENTLEMAN OF  
BALTIMORE, IN REFERENCE TO  
THE CASE OF THE REV. MR.  
DUNCAN**

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A Reply to Dr. Miller's Letter to a Gentleman of Baltimore, in Reference to the Case of the Rev. Mr. Duncan by John M. Duncan

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**JOHN M. DUNCAN**

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*Rev. Mr. Duffield*

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**REPLY**

TO

**DR. MILLER'S LETTER**

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**A GENTLEMAN OF BALTIMORE,**

IN REFERENCE TO THE CASE OF

**THE REV. MR. DUNCAN.**

BY JOHN M<sup>r</sup> DUNCAN,

*Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Tammany street, Baltimore.*

Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal:  
but as for them their way is not equal.—Ezek. xxxiii. 17.

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## REPLY, &c.

"A gentleman of Baltimore," whose name does not appear, feeling, no doubt, a very deep interest in their general subjects, has supposed himself warranted to solicit from Dr. Miller's pen, some notice of my "Remarks on the Rise, Use, and Unlawfulness of Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the church of God." The "uncommonly clear and powerful review," which "the venerable editor of the Christian Advocate" had furnished, it was understood, had not been generally read by those, who felt some regard, both for the parties concerned, and the subject under discussion. There seemed, therefore, to be a necessity that Dr. M. should again appear as the defendant of the creed-cause. His correspondent had suggested the alternative of addressing him privately, or answering his communication through the medium of the press: and Dr. M. preferring the latter course, has issued a long letter, ostensibly designed to elucidate my ecclesiastical circumstances, and to counteract the effects of my heretical aberrations. This correspondence has devolved upon me the unwelcome task of preparing the following sheets for the press.

06-13-45/1896

I am discarded, however, by the letter-writer, as "a controvertist by no means to his taste." And had he consulted his own inclinations, or addressed his correspondent *privately*, instead of canvassing my writings with so much freedom, and criticising them with so much tartness, I might have been spared the troublesome, and almost unnecessary, work which he has now obtruded upon my feelings and my leisure. Dr. M. could not have supposed, that my cause had been so entirely crushed, and the citadel of refuge for a vanquished foe had been so nearly demolished, that nothing more was wanted save the finishing stroke of desolation from his generous hand. I conclude then, that in rejecting the respondent as a champion not at all worthy of his superior tactics, he has fancied the *public mind* to be his antagonist: and, as I do by no means covet the high honour he refuses, I augur that there is some hope that the present controversy will soon be stripped of all offensive personalities.—So be it. But the letter before me must be taken as it is; and the worthy professor may, in any future publication, discuss the subject in the form which he may consider best suited to general edification.

In arranging the present remarks, they shall be thrown into sections, according as the nature of the subjects may admit, or as their importance may require. My intention is to take up the most important particulars which the letter has suggested, and on which its author reposes with most confidence and complacency. Some observations, however, on

the character of the "Remarks," with which the Doctor has prefaced his more serious discussions, must first be noticed; and to these I shall devote the first division of my reply.

### SECTION I.

Dr. M. has been pleased to say, that the "conclusive reason," why he has "forborne to make any answer" to my book, "is that it really *requires* no answer."—"He, (Mr. D.) is so far from having invalidated, or even weakened, any of the arguments in favour of creeds, urged in my Introductory Lecture, that he has hardly so much as touched them. I have conversed repeatedly with some of the most acute and enlightened men in our country, and solicited their candid judgment as to the real force of Mr. D's book. And they have ALL, with a single exception, united strongly in the opinion, that he has written nothing which impairs, in the least degree, the strength of my reasoning; nothing which possesses such a degree, even of plausibility, as to demand a reply. Why then should I write again, when all my original positions remain, not only unshaken, but really unassailed." These are good, round, assertions: almost enough to make any man lay down his pen in despair. But then there is one "most acute and enlightened" man, who does not think so meanly of the "Remarks:" and a suspicion darts across my brain, that the remainder might have been the advocates of the creed-system. I



make no doubt, however, that they expressed their honest opinions, and I regret that they have been brought across my path, as a passing remark may unintentionally wound a friend, whose feelings my heart would hold sacred. It seems, moreover, that Dr. M. has after all thought it necessary to "write again;" and to urge once more the very points so strongly pressed in his "Introductory Lecture;" and that too on the apparently unobtrusive solicitation of a "gentleman of Baltimore."

It may be necessary here to state, that the "Remarks" were pledged to do nothing more, than fairly and respectfully to controvert *the principles* of Dr. M's "Lecture." He was not followed step by step in the arrangement he thought proper to make. I chose to shape the subject for myself, according to my best apprehensions; and to take up the principles of the "Lecture," merely as they might be fairly introduced in the order of discussion. This course put the reader to the trouble of analysing my "Remarks," in order to range them along with Dr. M's arguments. If he did not please to do this, but to leave it as undeserving of his effort, which Dr. M. appears to have done in his reply, then I had conducted him, as far as personal ability and my time allowed, through the whole of the subject, as I apprehended it. Perhaps this was an ill-judged course. But then it seems, that throughout the greater part no presbyterian antagonist could be found; that almost all the propositions advanced were sound, and the facts stated indisputable; and

that it was useless to labour through so many pages in proof of things which no one denied. Yet, Dr. M. has thought proper to reply; the synod has thought proper to refuse forbearance; and the book is reviled as most heretical, and of most injurious tendency. There is a veil over these representations, which I shall not attempt to penetrate;—a mist, which time may disperse.

In sustaining the assertions already quoted, Dr. M. says—“Mr. D. is also fighting *without an adversary* in all that he has said, at so much length, and with so much laboured rhetoric, respecting the character of many of the christian clergy, within the first three or four hundred years after Christ.” Afterwards, when he would throw, what he apparently supposes to have been, my argument from the brief review that was taken of the history of the primitive church, into an “abridged syllogism,” he states it thus:—“Many of the clergy began, very early, to manifest an overbearing and grasping spirit; *therefore*, it is unlawful for the church, at present, to take any measures to prevent her ministers from falling into the same evil courses, and, for this purpose, to ascertain their soundness in the faith, and guard the purity of their principles.”—I feel as if it would be doing Dr. M. a most serious injustice, to believe that he saw nothing more in the deductions, made from the historical extracts in question. But he has said so, and I may not dispute his word. However, he may be assured that there was a vast deal more implied, than he appears to have disco-

vered, of which the following observations may, perhaps, convince him.

The fifth argument of the "Introductory Lecture" in favour of creeds, was expressed in the following proposition:—"The experience of *all ages* has found them indispensably necessary." If this proposition be true, it verily required some hardihood of adventure to undertake what, in the "Letter," has been denominated a "confessional battle." The doctrine of the "Remarks" is, that the proposition is not true, and the argument was designed to make it appear untrue. The reader will please to notice the following particulars:

1. Dr. M. in illustrating his proposition, had begun with the apostolic age; and discovered, if I understood him, an *ecclesiastical creed* in use among the apostles. By an ecclesiastical creed, let it be remembered, is to be understood "an accredited, permanent, public document"—"a summary of christian doctrine"—"a formulary," other than the scriptures—"a test" of orthodoxy. Now the apostles had no such thing, and I undertook to show that they had not. The scriptures have not stated the fact, that any such document was used by them; and history affords not the slightest proof that they left any such instrument behind them, for the use of the churches after they were gone. There has existed in the church a small schedule, which has been denominated the apostles' creed; and about this there has been considerable discussion. Some have supposed that the apostles did actually pen it;