

**A LETTER TO A GENTLEMAN  
OF BALTIMORE: IN REFERENCE  
TO THE CASE OF THE REV MR.  
DUNCAN. PP.3-90**

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A Letter to a Gentleman of Baltimore: In Reference to the Case of the Rev Mr. Duncan. pp.3-90  
by Samuel Miller

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**SAMUEL MILLER**

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**LETTER**

TO

**A Gentleman of Baltimore,**

IN REFERENCE TO THE CASE OF

**THE REV. MR. DUNCAN.**

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BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

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The wisdom that is from above is FIRST PURE, then peaceable.—JAMES iii. 17.

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## A Letter,

• Etc.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your communication of the second instant reached me a few days ago. For the many expressions of respect and kindness which it contains, I am very much your debtor. For the information which it gives me, I return you many thanks. And with the opinions which it intimates contrary to my own convictions of truth and duty, I am by no means offended; but rather feel thankful that your lot and mine are cast in a land in which to every man the privilege is secured, "et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere."

It has been, for some time past, my fixed purpose not to break silence on the principal subject to which you refer. And to adhere to this purpose, is still my prevailing inclination. Yet to queries offered with such a spirit, and for such an object, as those

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which appear to pervade your Letter, I cannot refuse a short reply ; especially as you seem to think, and assure me that others have thought, that 'the cause of truth requires me to say something. .

I. Your first inquiry is, "Why I have so long delayed to take any publick notice of the Reverend Mr. *Duncan's* volume on 'Creeds,' published nearly a year ago ; and whether, as has been rumoured among some of my friends, it is my design to remain silent in reference to that publication ?"

In answer to this inquiry, I have to say, that I read Mr. D.'s book, in a short time after its appearance, with all that attention, which the deep importance of the subject, and my own peculiar interest in the discussion, were likely to excite. Whether my perusal was an impartial one, it becomes not me very confidently to pronounce. But the issue of it was a prompt and firm determination, unless some unexpected occurrence should lead to a different view of the subject, never to take the least publick notice of the work.

The reasons which led me to form this determination were the following.

In the first place ; I have a native and strong aversion to controversy ; an aversion which increases with my age.

In the next place ; my professional avocations are very pressing ; my health is infirm ; and my mo-

ments of leisure, of course, are very few. These moments I am anxious to husband with the utmost vigilance, for the purpose of executing, if Providence permit, some plans which are with me peculiarly favourite objects, and from which I feel unwilling to be diverted by the further pursuit of this controversy.

Further; I had resolved, from the beginning, to have no public dispute with Mr. *Duncan*. Every man, it is presumed, who is at liberty to choose his antagonist, will take care to make a choice which will suit himself. Now, I early discovered, or thought I discovered, that Mr. D. although endowed with many highly estimable qualities, which invite acquaintance, and command respect; and capable of a sort of rhetorical writing which is well calculated to make an impression on a large class of readers; was still a controvertist by no means to my taste. He appears to me so singularly prone to miss the point of the argument which he undertakes to answer; and, at the same time, dogmatizes with such peculiar positiveness; is so perfectly sure of his own infallibility; and seems so confidently to expect that this will go for argument; that I felt insuperable reluctance to entering the lists with such a champion. Accordingly, when I prepared and published my "Lecture on Creeds," it was not without design that I excluded from it all reference, or even allusion to him. My purpose, for substance, remains the same. Nothing, that I can foresee,



shall drive me from my resolution to involve myself in no publick controversy with that Gentleman.

Again; I can perceive no benefit as likely to arise from a continuance of the discussion on Creeds. The sober and thinking part of the community, it appears to me, neither need nor wish it;—and, with respect to others, if ever so much were written, it would never be seriously read by them.

But the final and conclusive reason why I have forborne to make any answer to Mr. D's book, is, that it really *requires* no answer. He 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. If this were my own opinion, merely, I might, with good reason, suspect it of incorrectness. For every man's cause is apt to be "right in his own eyes," until "his neighbour cometh, and searcheth him out." But 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, even if I were ever so fond of theological warfare; when all my original

positions remain, not only unshaken, but really, unassailed? Shall I array new arguments? more are not necessary until the old ones are disposed of. Shall I repeat the old ones? I cannot prevail on myself to think this duly respectful either to Mr. D. himself, or to the publick. And, at any rate, it would be, if I am not totally deceived in my view of the subject, as purely a work of supererogation as ever was undertaken. For such undertakings I have neither time nor inclination.

I take for granted, indeed, that Mr. D. honestly views what he has done in a very different light. He, no doubt, believes that he has effectually demolished the citadel of Creeds, and scarcely "left one stone upon another." This is evident from the bold and triumphant style in which he closes many of his trains of illustration and professed reasoning. But I must be allowed to question whether reflecting readers, who are disposed seriously to examine this subject, and who look for solid argument from those who discuss it, will be satisfied with such logick as that with which his book abounds. In order to convince you that I am neither fastidious nor unreasonable, in saying, that I cannot and will not enter the lists of controversy with such a writer, let me beg that you will take another glance at what he has written—(a very cursory one will be sufficient,) and see whether he have not, most glaringly, laid himself open to the following charges,

1. It is evident that, in the warm appeals, and imposing declamation, which fill the greater part of his volume, HE IS CONTENDING WITHOUT AN ADVERSARY. When he labours, through so many pages, to shew—That “the Bible is the word of God;”—that as such, “it is obligatory on the human conscience;”—that “it is precisely suited to human beings as sinful and fallen, and embraces in its provisions all that is peculiar either in their character or their condition;”—that “the Scriptures have expressed their most pointed disapprobation of all human institutions that interfere with the authority of God over the conscience;” that “the Bible is the paramount and ONLY infalible rule of faith and practise;”—and that, of course, to attempt to put any other rule in its place, is direct rebellion against the Supreme Head of the Church:—When he employs, I say, so much impassioned declamation to establish these positions, a cursory reader would be apt to suppose that the friends of Creeds altogether deny, or, at least, do not fully admit them. Yet Mr. D. knows, and every soberminded man in the community knows, that this is not the fact. The advocates of Creeds perfectly agree with him in all these positions. There are no professing christians in the world who contend more earnestly than they do, for the divine excellence and supreme authority of the Scriptures; who deprecate more sincerely and unceasingly, the substitution of any other authoritative rule in the place of the Scriptures; or who admit more readily, that Creeds and Confessions,