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The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Being The Third of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

CIII. His opinion of the Divine Legation; and his desire to have the Essay on Man thought as favourable to the interests of religion as of virtue.

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FROM DR. SWIFT, etc. 333

Believe me, Sir, with the truest regard, and
the sincerest wish to deserve

Yours, &c.

L E T T E R C I I I .

Twittenham, June 24, 1740.

IT is true that I am a very unpunctual correspondent, tho' no unpunctual agent or friend; and that, in the commerce of words, I am both poor and lazy. Civility and Compliment generally are the goods that letter-writers exchange, which, with honest men, seems a kind of illicite trade, by having been, for the most part carried on, and carried furthest by designing men. I am therefore reduced to plain enquiries, how my friend does, and what he does? and to repetitions, which I am afraid to tire him with, *how much I love him*. Your two kind letters gave me real satisfaction, in hearing you were safe and well; and in shewing me you took kindly my unaffected endeavours to prove my esteem for you, and delight in your conversation. Indeed my languid state of health, and frequent deficiency of spirits, together with a number of dissipations, *et aliena negotia centum*, all conspire to throw a faintness and cool appearance over my
conduct

conduct to those I best love; which I perpetually feel, and grieve at: But in earnest, no man is more deeply touched with merit in general, or with particular merit towards me, in any one. You ought therefore in both views to hold yourself what you are to me in my opinion and affection; so high in each, that I may perhaps seldom attempt to tell it you. The greatest justice, and favour too that you can do me, is to take it for granted.

Do not therefore commend my talents, but instruct me by your own. I am not really learned enough to be a judge in works of the nature and depth of yours. But I travel thro' your book as thro' an amazing scene of ancient Egypt or Greece; struck with veneration and wonder; but at every step wanting an instructor to tell me all I wish to know. Such you prove to me in the walks of antiquity; and such you will prove to all mankind: but with this additional character, more than any other searcher into antiquities, that of a genius equal to your pains, and of a taste equal to your learning.

I am obliged greatly to you, for what you have projected at Cambridge, in relation to my *Essay*^a; but more for the motive which did

^a Mr. Pope desired the | translation of the *Essay on*
 editor to procure a good | *Man* into latin prose.
 originally

FROM DR. SWIFT, etc. 335

originally, and does consequentially in a manner, animate all your goodness to me, the opinion you entertain of my honest intention in that piece, and your zeal to demonstrate me no irreligious man. I was very sincere with you in what I told you of my own opinion of my own character as a poet^b, and, I think I may conscientiously say, I shall die in it. I have nothing to add, but that I hope sometimes to hear you are well, as you certainly shall now and then hear the best I can tell you of myself.

L E T T E R C I V .

Oct. 27, 1740.

I Am grown so bad a correspondent, partly thro' the weakness of my eyes, which has much increased of late, and partly thro' other disagreeable accidents (almost peculiar to me) that my oldest as well as best friends are reasonable enough to excuse me. I know you are of the number who deserve all the testimonies of any sort, which I can give you of esteem and friendship; and I confide in you, as a man of candour enough, to know it cannot be otherwise, if I am an honest one. So I will say no more on this head, but proceed to thank

^a See his life.

you