



## **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

Containing The First of his Letters

**Pope, Alexander**

**London, 1751**

II. To the same. On a passage on the same Essay.

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Nutzungsbedingungen

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-56122](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-56122)

laugh them out of it. I am highly obliged to the Abbe's zeal in my commendation, and goodness in not concealing what he thinks my error. And his testifying some esteem for the book just at a time when his brethren rais'd a clamour against it, is an instance of great generosity and candour, which I shall ever acknowledge.

Your, &c.

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L E T T E R II.

To the same.

June 18, 1711.

**I**N your last you informed me of the mistaken zeal of some people, who seem to make it no less their business to persuade men they are erroneous, than doctors do that they are sick; only that they may magnify their own cure, and triumph over an imaginary distemper. The simile objected to in my Essay,

*(Thus wit, like faith, by each man is apply'd  
To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.)*

plainly concludes at this second line, where stands a full stop: and what follows (*Meanly they seek, &c.*) speaks only of wit (which is meant by that blessing, and that fun) for how  
can



can the sun of faith be said to sublime the southern wits, and to ripen the genius's of northern climates? I fear, these gentlemen understand grammar as little as they do criticism: and, perhaps, out of good-nature to the monks, are willing to take from them the censure of ignorance, and to have it to themselves. The word *they* refers (as, I am sure, I meant, and as I thought every one must have known) to those Critics there spoken of, who are partial to some particular sett of writers, to the prejudice of all others. And the very simile itself, if twice read, may convince them, that the censure here of damning, lies not on our church at all, unless they call our church *one small sect*: and the cautious words (*by each man*) manifestly show it a general reflection on all such (whoever they are) who entertain those narrow and limited notions of the mercy of the Almighty; which the reformed ministers and presbyterians are as guilty of as any people living.

Yet after all, I promise you, Sir, if the alteration of a word or two will gratify any man of sound faith tho' weak understanding, I will (though it were from no other principle than that of common good-nature) comply with it. And if you please but to particularize the spot where their objection lies (for it is in a very narrow compass) that stumbling-block, tho' it



be but a little pebble, shall be removed out of their way. If the heat of these good disputants (who, I am afraid, being bred up to wrangle in the schools, cannot get rid of the humour all their lives) should proceed so far as to personal reflections upon me, I assure you, notwithstanding, I will do or say nothing, however provok'd (for some people can no more provoke than oblige) that is unbecoming the true character of a Catholic. I will set before me the example of that great man, and great saint, Erasmus; who in the midst of calumny proceeded with all the calmness of innocence<sup>a</sup>, and the unrevenging spirit of primitive christianity. However, I would advise them to suffer the mention of him to pass unregarded, lest I should be forced to do that for his reputation which I would never do for my own; I mean, to vindicate so great a light of our church from the malice of past times, and the ignorance of the present, in a language which may extend farther than that in which the trifle about criticism is written. I wish these gentlemen would be contented with finding fault with me only, who will submit to them right or wrong, as far as I only am concerned; I have a greater regard to the quiet of mankind than to disturb

<sup>a</sup> I doubt this is not strictly true. See his Answers to Lee, archbishop of York.



it for things of so little consequence as my credit and my sense. A little humility can do a poet no hurt, and a little charity would do a priest none: for, as St. Austin finely says, *Ubi charitas, ibi humilitas; ubi humilitas, ibi pax.*

Your, &c.

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LETTER III.

To the same.

July 19, 1711.

THE concern which you more than seem to be affected with for my reputation, by the several accounts you have so obligingly given of what reports and censures the holy Vandals have thought fit to pass upon me, makes me desirous of telling so good a friend my whole thoughts of this matter; and of setting before you, in a clear light, the true state of it.

I have ever believed the best piece of service one could do to our religion, was openly to express our detestation and scorn of all those mean artifices and *piæ fraudes*, which it stands so little in need of, and which have laid it under so great a scandal among its enemies.

Nothing has been so much a scarecrow to them, as that too peremptory and uncharitable  
assertion