

To Jonathan Swift

Michael Moran

Speak not of fright'ning hate for all mankind,
Nor torment with despising thought a mind
And heart that in reality must feel—
As later writings, nobler works, reveal—
True love for erring—though not worthless—man,
And make thy line a pleasant one to scan.

But think not that I beg for flowering phrase,
Or gentler words to cheer life's cheerless days—
Such prostitution of ideal for song
That speaks not truth but prettiness is wrong—
So, lest in haste this anxious, prying youth
Should perjure while demanding strictest truth
From one whose years at least might claim respect,
I'll state the point, and idle verse neglect.

Your damning letter to the worthy Pope
Condemns man as corrupt beyond all hope.
And then, as though with sentiment reversed,
You wrote four books on man—the beast accursed.
The depth and length of such a work betrays,
It seems to me, your vow of early days,
For who applies so keen a wit as yours
Denouncing at great length that which they curse?
The answer, I believe, belies in fact
The motive you profess inspired the act.
Would not such industry and shrewd insight
Seem indication that a will to right
The ways of mankind was in truth the urge?
Some hope to cleanse the race with verbal purge?

Hark, Jonathan! You're list'ning, are you not?
My words aren't meant to be ignored—forgot.

But answerless I am and must remain—
Jonathan—quite dead—can't write again.