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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

XLVIII. From the same. Of his studies, particularly a metaphysical work. Of retirement and exercise. - Postscript by Mr. P. His with that their studies were united in some work useful to manners, and ...

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have formerly made some strong efforts to get and to deserve a friend: perhaps it were wiser never to attempt it, but live Extempore, and look upon the world only as a place to pass thro', just pay your hosts their due, disperse a little charity, and hurry on. Yet am I just now writing (or rather planning) a book, to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in good humour. — And just now too, I am going to see one I love very tenderly; and to-morrow to entertain several civil people, whom if we call friends, it is by the Courtesy of England. — *Sic, sic juvat ire sub umbras.* While we do live, we must make the best of life,

Cantantes licet usque (minus via lædet) eamus,
as the shepherd said in Virgil, when the road was long and heavy. I am yours.

L E T T E R XLVIII.

Lord BOLINGBROKE to Dr. SWIFT.

YOU may assure yourself, that, if you come over this spring, you will find me not only got back into the habits of study, but devoted to that historical task, which you have

set me these many years. I am in hopes of some materials which will enable me to work in the whole extent of the plan I propose to myself. If they are not to be had, I must accommodate my plan to this deficiency. In the mean time Pope has given me more trouble than he or I thought of; and you will be surprized to find that I have been partly drawn by him and partly by myself, to write a pretty large volume upon a very grave and very important subject; that I have ventur'd to pay no regard whatever to any authority except sacred authority, and that I have ventured to start a thought, which must, if it is push'd as successfully as I think it is, render all your Metaphysical Theology both ridiculous and abominable. There is an expression in one of your letters to me, which makes me believe you will come into my way of thinking on this subject; and yet I am persuaded that Divines and Freethinkers would both be clamorous against it, if it was to be submitted to their censure, as I do not intend that it shall. The passage I mean, is that where you say that you told Dr. * the Grand points of Christianity ought to be taken as infallible Revelations^a, &c.

^a In this maxim all bigoted *Divines* and *free-thinking* Politicians agree: the one, for fear of disturbing the established Religion; the other, lest that disturbance should prove injurious to their administration of government.

It

It has happened, that, whilst I was writing this to you, the Dr. came to make me a visit from London, where I heard he was arrived some time ago: He was in haste to return, and is, I perceive, in great haste to print. He left with me eight Dissertations^b, a small part, as I understand, of his work, and desired me to peruse, consider, and observe upon them against monday next, when he will come down again. By what I have read of the two first, I find myself unable to serve him. The principles he reasons upon are begged in a disputation of this sort, and the manner of reasoning is by no means close and conclusive. The sole advice I could give him in conscience would be that which he would take ill and not follow. I will get rid of this task as well as I can, for I esteem the man, and should be sorry to disoblige him where I cannot serve him.

As to retirement, and exercise, your notions are true: The first should not be indulged so much as to render us savage, nor the last neglected so as to impair health. But I know men, who, for fear of being savage, live with all who will live with them; and who, to preserve their health, saunter away half their time. Adieu: Pope calls for the paper.

^b *Revelation examined with candor.*

P. S.

P.S. I hope what goes before will be a strong motive to your coming. God knows if ever I shall see Ireland; I shall never desire it, if you can be got hither, or kept here. Yet I think I shall be, too soon, a Free-man. — Your recommendations I constantly give to those you mention; tho' some of 'em I see but seldom, and am every day more retired. I am less fond of the world, and less curious about it: yet no way out of humour, disappointed, or angry: tho' in my way I receive as many injuries as my betters, but I don't feel them, therefore I ought not to vex other people, nor even to return injuries. I pass almost all my time at Dawley and at home; my Lord (of which I partly take the merit to myself) is as much estranged from politics as I am. Let Philosophy be ever so vain, it is less vain now than Politics, and not quite so vain at present as Divinity: I know nothing that moves strongly but Satire, and those who are ashamed of nothing else, are so of being ridiculous. I fancy, if we three were together but for three years, some good might be done even upon this Age.

I know you'll desire some account of my health: It is as usual, but my spirits rather worse. I write little or nothing. You know I never had either a taste or talent for politics, and the world minds nothing else. I have personal

fonal obligations which I will ever preserve, to men of different fides, and I wish nothing so much as public quiet, except it be my own quiet. I think it a merit, if I can take off any man from grating or satirical subjects, merely on the score of Party: and it is the greatest vanity of my life that I've contributed to turn my Lord Bolingbroke to subjects moral, useful, and more worthy his pen. Dr. ——'s Book is what I can't commend so much as Dean Berkley's^c, tho' it has many things ingenious in it, and is not deficient in the writing part: but the whole book, tho' he meant it *ad Populum*, is, I think, purely *ad Clerum*^d. Adieu.

^c A fine original work called, *The Minute Philosopher*.

^d He might have added à *Clero*, as most of these ingenious things are borrowed from his Brethren.