



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 Second of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

IV. The answer.

Nutzungsbedingungen

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-55314](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-55314)

far as to let me know how he does; at the same time I shall know how you do, and that will be a double satisfaction to

Your, &c.

L E T T E R I V.

The Answer.

MY LORD,

Nov. 20, 1717.

I Am truly obliged by your kind condolence on my Father's death, and the desire you express that I should improve this incident to my advantage. I know your Lordship's friendship to me is so extensive, that you include in that wish both my spiritual and my temporal advantage; and it is what I owe to that friendship, to open my mind unreservedly to you on this head. It is true, I have lost a parent for whom no gains I could make would be any equivalent. But that was not my only tie: I thank God another still remains (and long may it remain) of the same tender nature: *Genitrix est mihi*—and excuse me if I say with Euryalus,

nequeam lacrymas perferre parentis.

A rigid divine may call it a carnal tie, but sure it is a virtuous one: at least I am more certain

that it is a duty of nature to preserve a good parent's life and happiness, than I am of any speculative point whatever.

*Ignaram hujus quodcunque pericli
Hanc ego, nunc, linquam?*

For she, my Lord, would think this separation more grievous than any other, and I, for my part, know as little as poor Euryalus did, of the success of such an adventure, (for an Adventure it is, and no small one, in spite of the most positive divinity.) Whether the change would be to my spiritual advantage, God only knows: this I know, that I mean as well in the religion I now profess, as I can possibly ever do in another. Can a man who thinks so, justify a change, even if he thought both equally good? To such an one, the part of *Joyning* with any one body of Christians might perhaps be easy, but I think it would not be so, to *Renounce* the other.

Your Lordship has formerly advis'd me to read the best controversies between the Churches. Shall I tell you a secret? I did so at fourteen years old, (for I loved reading, and my father had no other books) there was a collection of all that had been written on both sides in the reign of King James the second: I warm'd my head with them, and the consequence was, that

I found

I found myself a Papist and a Protestant by turns, according to the last book I read^a. I am afraid most Seekers are in the same case, and when they stop, they are not so properly converted, as out-witted. You see how little glory you would gain by my conversion. And after all, I verily believe your Lordship and I are both of the same religion, if we were thoroughly understood by one another, and that all honest and reasonable christians would be so, if they did but talk enough together every day; and had nothing to do together, but to serve God, and live in peace with their neighbour.

As to the *temporal* side of the question, I can have no dispute with you; it is certain, all the beneficial circumstances of life, and all the shining ones, lie on the part you would invite me to. But if I could bring myself to fancy, what I think you do but fancy, that I have any talents for active life, I want health for it; and besides it is a real truth, I have less Inclination (if possible) than Ability. Contemplative life is not only my scene, but it is my habit too. I begun my life where most people end theirs, with a dis-relish of all that the world calls Am-

^a This is an admirable description of every Reader labouring in religious controversy, without possessing the

principles on which a right judgment of the points in question is to be regulated.

bition: I don't know why 'tis call'd so, for to me it always seem'd to be rather *stooping* than *climbing*. I'll tell you my politic and religious sentiments in a few words. In my politics, I think no further than how to preserve the peace of my life, in any government under which I live; nor in my religion, than to preserve the peace of my conscience, in any church with which I communicate. I hope all churches and all governments are so far of God, as they are rightly understood, and rightly administred: and where they are, or may be wrong, I leave it to God alone to mend or reform them; which whenever he does, it must be by greater instruments than I am. I am not a Papiſt, for I renounce the temporal invasions of the Papal power, and detest their arrogated authority over Princes and States. I am a Catholick in the strictest sense of the word. If I was born under an absolute Prince, I would be a quiet subject; but I thank God I was not. I have a due sense of the excellence of the British constitution. In a word, the things I have always wished to see are not a Roman Catholic, or a French Catholic, or a Spanish Catholic, but a true Catholic: and not a King of Whigs, or a King of Tories, but a King of England. Which God of his mercy grant his present Majesty may be, and all future Majesties:

FROM DR. ATTERBURY. 89

jesties: You see, my Lord, I end like a preacher: this is *Sermo ad Clerum*, not *ad Populum*. Believe me, with infinite obligation and sincere thanks, ever

Your, &c.

L E T T E R V.

Sept. 23, 1720.

I Hope you have some time ago receiv'd the Sulphur, and the two volumes of Mr. Gay, as instances (how small ones soever) that I wish you both health and diversion. What I now send for your perusal, I shall say nothing of; not to forestall by a single word what you promis'd to say upon that subject. Your Lordship may criticise from Virgil to these Tales; as Solomon wrote of every thing from the cedar to the hyssop. I have some cause, since I last waited on you at Bromley, to look upon you as a prophet in that retreat, from whom oracles are to be had, were mankind wise enough to go thither to consult you: The fate of the South-sea Scheme has, much sooner than I expected, verify'd what you told me. Most people thought the time would come, but no man prepared for it; no man consider'd it would come *like a Thief in the Night*, exactly as it happens