



## **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**

XLVIII. The answer.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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FROM SEVERAL PERSONS. 241

Euthanasia. Living or dying, I shall always  
be Yours, &c.

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LETTER XLVIII.

TO DR. ARBUTHNOT.

July 26, 1734.

I Thank you for your letter, which has all those genuine marks of a good mind by which I have ever distinguish'd yours, and for which I have so long loved you. Our friendship has been constant; because it was grounded on good principles, and therefore not only uninterrupted by any Distrust, but by any Vanity, much less any Interest.

What you recommend to me with the solemnity of a Last Request, shall have its due weight with me. That disdain and indignation against Vice, is (I thank God) the only disdain and indignation I have: It is sincere, and it will be a lasting one. But sure it is as impossible to have a just abhorrence of Vice, without hating the Vicious, as to bear a true love for Virtue, without loving the Good. To reform and not to chastise, I am afraid, is impossible; and that the best Precepts, as well as the best Laws, would prove of small use, if there were no Examples to enforce them. To

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attack

attack Vices in the abstract, without touching Persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with Shadows. General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compar'd with plain, full, and home examples: Precepts only apply to our Reason, which in most men is but weak: Examples are pictures, and strike the Senses, nay raise the Passions, and call in those (the strongest and most general of all motives) to the aid of reformation. Every vicious man makes the case his own; and that is the only way by which such men can be affected, much less deterr'd. So that to chastise is to reform. The only sign by which I found my writings ever did any good, or had any weight, has been that they rais'd the anger of bad men. And my greatest comfort, and encouragement to proceed, has been to see, that those who have no shame, and no fear of any thing else, have appear'd touch'd by my Satires.

As to your kind concern for my Safety, I can guess what occasions it at this time. Some Characters<sup>a</sup> I have drawn are such, that if there be any who deserve them, 'tis evidently a service to mankind to point those men out; yet such as, if all the world gave them, none, I think, will own they take to themselves. But

<sup>a</sup> The Character of Sporus in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

if they should, those of whom all the world think in such a manner, must be men I cannot fear. Such in particular as have the meanness to do mischiefs in the dark, have seldom the courage to justify them in the face of day; the talents that make a Cheat or a Whisperer, are not the same that qualify a man for an Insulter; and as to private villainy, it is not so safe to join in an Assassination, as in a Libel<sup>b</sup>. I will consult my safety so far as I think becomes a prudent man: but not so far as to omit any thing which I think becomes an honest one. As to personal attacks beyond the law, every man is liable to them: as for danger within the law, I am not guilty enough to fear any. For the good opinion of all the world, I know, it is not to be had: for that of worthy men, I hope, I shall not forfeit it: for that of the Great, or those in power, I may wish I had it; but if thro' misrepresentations (too common about persons in that station) I have it not, I shall be sorry, but not miserable in the want of it.

It is certain, much freer Satirists than I, have enjoy'd the encouragement and protection of the Princes under whom they lived. Augustus and Mæcenus made Horace their companion, though he had been in arms on the side of

<sup>b</sup> See the following Letter to a noble Lord.

Brutus ; and, allow me to remark, it was out of the suffering Party too, that they favour'd and distinguish'd Virgil. You will not suspect me of comparing myself with Virgil and Horace, nor even with another Court-favourite, Boileau<sup>c</sup>. I have always been too modest to imagine my Panegyrics were Incense worthy of a Court ; and that, I hope, will be thought the true reason why I have never offer'd any. I would only have observ'd, that it was under the greatest Princes and best Ministers, that moral Satirists were most encouraged ; and that then Poets exercised the same jurisdiction over the Follies, as Historians did over the Vices of men. It may also be worth considering, whether Augustus himself makes the greater figure, in the writings of the former, or of the latter ? and whether Nero and Domitian do not appear as ridiculous for their false Taste and Affectation, in Persius and Juvenal, as odious for their bad Government in Tacitus and Suetonius ? In the first of these reigns it was, that Horace was protected and caress'd ; and in the latter that Lucan was put to death, and Juvenal banish'd.

I would not have said so much, but to shew you my whole heart on this subject ; and to convince you, I am deliberately bent to perform that

<sup>c</sup> See Letter cIII. to Mr. Warburton.

Request which you make your last to me, and to perform it with Temper, Justice, and Resolution. As your Approbation (being the testimony of a sound head and an honest heart) does greatly confirm me herein, I wish you may live to see the effect it may hereafter have upon me, in something more deserving of that approbation. But if it be the Will of God, (which, I know, will also be yours) that we must separate, I hope it will be better for You than it can be for me. You are fitter to live, or to die, than any man I know. Adieu, my dear friend! and may God preserve your life easy, or make your death happy<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>d</sup> This excellent person died Feb. 27, 1734-5.