

# ERASMUS DESIDERIUS

TWO  
DIALOGUES

# Desiderius Erasmus

## Two Dyaloges

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*Two Dyaloges (c. 1549) / Wrytten in laten by the famous clerke, D. Erasm[us] of Roterodame, one called Polyphemus or the gospeller, the other dysposyng of thynges and names, translated in to Englyshe by Edmonde Becke.:*

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**and names/ translated**

**in to Englyshe by**

# The preface to the Reader

Lucius Anneus Seneca amonge many other pratie saienges (gentle reder) hathe this also, whiche in my iudgement is as trew as it is wittie. Rogādo cogit qui rogat superior. And in effecte is thus moch to say, yf a mānes superior or his better desyre any thige, he might aswell cōmāde it by authoritie as ones to desyre it.

A gentleman a nere cosyn of myne, but moch nerer in fryndshyp, eftesones dyd instant and moue me to translate these two dyaloges folowyng, to whose getlenes I am so moch obliged, indetted and bounde, that he myght well haue cōmaunded me to this and more paynes: to whome I do not onely owe seruyce, but my selfe also. And in accōplysshynge of his most honest request (partly by cause I wolde not the moost inhumane fawte of Ingratitude shuld worthely be imputed to me, & that I might in this thyng also (accordynge to my bounden dutie) gratifie my frende) I haue hassard my selfe in these daungerous dayes, where many are so capcyous, some prone and redy to malygne & depraeue, and fewe whose eares are not so festidious, tendre, and redy to please, that in very tryfles & thynges of small importaunce, yet exacte dylygence and exquisite iudgement is loked for and requyred, of them whiche at this present wyll attempte to translate any boke be it that the matter be neuer so base. But what diligence I have employed in the translaciō hereof I referre it to the iudgement of the lerned sort, whiche cōferynge

my translacion with the laten dyaloges, I dowte not wyl condone and pardone my boldnesse, in that that I challenge the semblable lybertie whiche the translatours of this tyme iustlie challenge. For some heretofore submytting them selfe to seruytude, haue lytle respecte to the obseruaciō of the thyng which in translacyō is of all other most necessary and requisite, that is to saye, to rendre the sence & the very meanyng of the author, not so relygyouslie addicte to translate worde for worde, for so the sence of the author is oftentimes corrupted & depraued, and neyther the grace of the one tonge nor yet of the other is truely observed or aptlie expressed. The lerned knoweth y<sup>t</sup> euery tonge hathe his peculyer proprietie, phrase, maner of locucion, enargies and vehemēcie, which so aptlie in any other tōg can not be expressed. Yf I shal perceyue this my symple doinge to be thankfully taken, and in good parte accepted, it shall encorage me hereafter to attempte the translaciō of some bokes dysposing of matters bothe delectable, frutefull, & expedient to be knowen, by the grace of God, who gyuyng me quyetnes of mynde, lybertie, and abylytie, shall not desyste to communicat the frute of my spare howers, to such as are not lerned in the laten tonge: to whome I dedycat the fyrste frutes of this my symple translacyon.

# A declaracion of the names

Poliphemus sygnifieth, valyant or noble, and in an other sygnifi cacion, talcatyfe or clybbe of tong. The name of a Gyant called Cyclops, hauynge but one eye in his forhed, of a huge stature and a myghtie psonage. And is aplied here to sygnifie a great freke or a lubber, as this Poliphemus was, whiche beynge a man of warre or



a courtyer, had a newe testament in his  
hande, and loked buselie for some  
sentence or text of scripture  
and that Cannius his  
companyõ espyed and  
sayd to hî as  
foloweth

¶ The parsons names are  
Cannius and Polipheimus.

# The parsons names are Cannius and Poliphemus

**Cannius.** what hunt Polipheme for here?

**Poliphem<sup>9</sup>.** Aske ye what I hunt for here, and yet ye se me haue neyther dogges, dart, Jauelyn, nor huntynge staffe.

**Cannius.** Paraduenture ye hunt after some praty nympe of the couert.

**Poliphemus.** By my trouthe and well coniectured, be holde what a goodly pursenet, or a hay I haue here in my hande.

**Canni<sup>9</sup>.** Benedicite, what a straunge syght is this, me thinke I se Bachus in a lyons skin, Poliphemus with a boke in his hande. This is a dogge in a doblet, a sowe w<sup>t</sup> a sadle, of all that euer I se it is a non decet.

**Poliphe.** I haue not onely paynted and garnysed my boke with saffron, but also I haue lymmed it withe Sinople, asaphetida, redleed, vermilō, and byse.

**Can.** It is a warlyke boke, for it is furnished with knottes, tassils plates, claspes, and brasen bullyons.

**Poliphe.** Take the boke in your hand and loke within it.

**Canni.** I se it wery well. Truly it is a praty boke, but me thyntes ye haue not yet trymmed it sufficiently for all your cost ye have bestowed upon it.

**Poliphe.** Why what lackes it?

**Canni.** Thou shuldest haue set thyne armes upon it.

**Poliphem<sup>9</sup>.** what armes I beseche the?

**Cāni<sup>9</sup>.** Mary the heed of Silenus, an olde iolthed drunkard totynge out of a hoggeshed or a tunne, but in good earnest, wherof dothe your boke dyspose or intreate? dothe it teache the art and crafte to drynke a duetaunt?

**Poli.** Take hede in goddes name what ye say lest ye bolt out a blasphemie before ye be ware.

**Cāni<sup>9</sup>.** why bydde ye me take hede what I saye? is there any holy matt<sup>r</sup> in the boke?

**Poli.** what mā it is the gospell boke, I trow there is nothyng can be more holye.

**Canni<sup>9</sup>.** God for thy grace what hathe Poliphemus to do withe the gospell?

**Poli.** Nay why do ye not aske what a chrysten man hathe to do with christe?

**Canni<sup>9</sup>.** I can not tell but me thynkes a rousty byll or a halbard wold become such a great lubber or a slouyn as thou arte a great deale better, for yf it were my chaûce to mete such one and knewe him not upon seeborde, and he loked so lyke a knaue and a ruffyā as thou dost I wolde take hym for a pirate or a rouer upon the see/ and if I met such one in the wood for an arrante thefe, and a man murderer.

**Poli.** yea good syr but the gospell teache vs this same lesson, that we shuld not iudge any person by his loke or by his externall

& outwarde apparaunce. For lyke wyse as many tymes vnder a graye freers coote a tyrannous mynde lyeth secretly hyd, eue so a polled heed, a crispe or a twyrled berde, a frowninge, a ferse, or a dogged loke, a cappe, or a hat with an oystreich fether, a soldyers cassocke, a payre of hooose all to cut and manglyd, may couer an euangelycall mynde.

**Cannius.** why not, mary God forbyd elles, yea & many tymes a symple shepe lyeth hyd in a wolfes skynne, and yf a man maye credite and beleue the fables of Aesope, an asse maye lye secretly unknowen by cause he is in a lyons skynne.

**Poliphe.** Naye I knowe hym whiche bereth a shepe vpon his heed, and a sore in his brest, to whome I wold wysse with al my hart that he had as whyte and as fauorable frendes as he hathe blacke eyes. And I wolde wisse also that he were as well guylt ouer and ouer as he hathe a colour mete to take guyltynge.

**Canni.** Yf ye take hym to were a shepe vpon his heed, that weareth a cappe of woll, howe greuously than art thou lodyn, or what an excedyng heuy burdê bearest thou then I praye the whiche bearest a hooole shepe and an ostryche to vpon thy heed? But what saye ye to hî doth not he more folysly which beareth a byrd vpon his heed, and an asse in his brest.

**Poliphemus.** There ye nypped & taunted me in dede.

**Cannius.** But I wolde saye this geere dyd wonderous wel yf this gospel boke dyd so adourne the with vertue as thou hast adourned lymmed, and gorgiously garnysshed it with many gay goodly glystryng ornamentes. Mary syr thou hast set it forth in his

ryght colours in dede, wolde to god it might so adourne the with good cōdiciōs that thou myghtest ones lerne to be an honest man.

**Poli.** There shall be no defaute in me, I tell you I wyll do my diligence.

**Can.** Naye there is no doute of that, there shall be no more faute in you now I dare say then was wonte to be.

**Poli.** Yea but (youre tarte tauntes, and youre churlysshe checkes, and raylynges set asyde) tell me I pray the this one thyng, do you thus dispraise, condempne, or fynde faute with them whiche caryeth aboute with them the newe testament or the gospel boke?

**Canni.** No by my fayth do I not good praty man.

**Poliphe.** Call ye me but a praty one and I am hygher then you by y<sup>e</sup> length of a good asses heed.

**Can.** I thynke not fully so moche yf the asse stretch forth his eares, but go to it skyllis no matter of that, let it passe, he that bare Christ vpon his backe was called Christofer, and thou whiche bearest the gospell boke aboute with the shall for Poliphemus be called the gospeller or the gospell bearer.

**Polip.** Do not you counte it an holy thyng to cary aboute with a man the newe testament?

**Cāni.** why no syr by my trouth do I not, except thou graunte the very asses to be holy to.

**Poli.** How can an asse be holy?

**Cannius.** For one asse alone is able to beare thre hundreth suche bokes, and I thynke suche a great lubber as thou art were

stronge inoughe to beare as great a burden, and yf thou had a hansom packesadle sette vpon thy backe.

**Poliphe.** And yet for all your iestyng it is not agaynst good reason to saye that ye asse was holy which bore christ.

**Cannius.** I do not enuye you man for this holynes for I had as lefe you had that holynes as I, and yf it please you to take it I wyll geue you an holy & a religious relyke of the selfe same asse whiche christ rode vpon, and whan ye haue it ye may kysse it lycke it and cull it as ofte as ye lyst.

**Poli.** Mary syr I thanke you, ye can not gyue me a more thanckefull gyfte nor do me a greater pleasure, for that asse withouten any taylor was made as holye as any asse could be by the touchynge of christes body.

**Canni<sup>9</sup>.** Undouted they touched christes body also whiche stroke and buffeted christ.

**Poliphe.** yea but tell me this one thyng I praye the in good earnest. Is it not a great sygne of holynes in a man to cary aboute the gospel booke or the newe testament?

**Cannius.** It is a token of holynes in dede if it be done without hypocrysie, I meane if it be done without dissimulacion/and for that end, intent & purpose, that it shuld be done for.

**Poliphe.** What the deuyl & a morten tellest thou a man of warre of hypocrisie, away with hypocrisie to the monkes and the freers.

**Cannius.** Yea but bycause ye saye so, tell me fyrste I praye you what ye call hypocrisie.

**Po.** When a man pretendis another thyng outwardly then he meanis secretly in his mynde.

**Cannius.** But what dothe the bearynge aboute of the newe testament sygnyfie. Dothe it not betoken that thy lyfe shulde be conformable to the gospell which thou carryest aboute with the.

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