

# ERASMUS DESIDERIUS

A VERY PLEASAUNT &  
FRUITFUL DIOLOGE  
CALLED THE EPICURE

Desiderius Erasmus

**A Very Pleasaunt & Fruitful  
Diologe Called the Epicure**

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**Erasmus D.**

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**Desiderius Erasmus**  
**A Very Pleasaunt & Fruitful**  
**Diologe Called the Epicure**

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**1545**

**S. Paule to the Ephesians**

**You that haue professed Christ,  
suffre not your selues to be deceyued  
vvith false doctrine, nor vaine  
and noughtie talkyng, but herken**

renoume, doo neither make men better, ne yet happiar, contrarie too the blynde & fonde iudgement of the most part of menne: but by the power and strength of the mynde, that is, learnyng, wysedome, and vertue, all menne are hyghly enriched, ornated, & most purely beutified, for these bee thinges bothe notable, eternall, and verye familiar betwene the heauenly father & vs. It is therefore euidente (most excellent Prince) that the fittest ornamêtes for your graces tender age, bee, eruditiō and vertue. Wherunto you are bothe so earnestly addicte and therin so wōderfully doo preuaile, that I nede not too exhorte & exstimulate your grace vnto the study thereof. For that God him self hath wrought, and fourmed your mynde so apt and desirous too attayne and diligētly too seeke for al godly doctrine, that euē now you doo shewe in all youre saynges and dooinges suche a wonderfull pleasautes much lyke vnto a certayne swete musike or harmonie, that any honest hart exceedinglye woulde reioyce in the sight therof. Verely, your grace thinketh plainly all time lost, that is not bestowed vpon learnyng, which is a verie rare thyng in anye childe, and rarest of all in a Prince. Thus youre noblenes, rather desireth vertue and learning the most surest and excellent treasures, which farre surmounte all worldly ryches, then anye vanities or trifles. Nowe youre grace prepareth for the holsome and pleasaunt foode of the mynde. Now you seke for that whiche you shal fynd most surest helper and faythfulst councellour in all your affaires. Now your magnificēt mynde studieth that, whiche all Englyshe menne with meke and humile heartes shuld desire GOD to endue your grace with all. Now with diligent labour you searche for a thyng, as one most myndeful of this sayng: Happy is that realme that hath a lerned Prince. Nowe you trauaile for that, whiche conquereth, and kepeth doune all greuous tourmentes & outragious affections of the mynde, too the furderauce of good liuyng, and maintenaūce of vertue, I meane holsome erudition and learnyng. Many Heathen Princes forsoth, are highly magnified with most ample prayses, which gaue them selues too the study of Philosophie, or knowledge of tongues, for their owne commoditie, and especially for the weale of their subiectes. Who is nowe more celebrated and worthelier extolled then Mithridates? that noble kyng of Pont and Bithinia, which, (as Aulus Gellius writeth) vnderstode so perfityly the languages of .xxii. sondrye countries that were vnder his dominiō, that he neuer vsed any interpretour too answer his subiectes, but spake their lāguages so finelye, as though he had been of the same coūtrie. Ageyn, that honorable manne Quintus Ennius saied: that he had .iii. heartes, because he coulde speake Greke, Italian, and Latin. Yea, and breuely, the most famaous writers, as well the Heathen, as the Christien, with an vniuersall consent, playnly affirme: Whan thei had weied the nature and condiciō of the purest thinges vnder heauen, thei sawe nothyng faire, or of any pryce, or that ought too be accōpted ours, but onely vertue and learning. Euen now too acknowledge that same, it is yeouē you from aboue, for your grace delecteth in nothyng more then too bee occupied in the holye Byble: wherin, you beginne too sauer & smelle furth the treasure of wisedome, knowledge and fulnes of the deuyne power, that is a studie most conuenient for euery Christien Prince, that kynd of studye cannot haue sufficient laude and commendation. Whose Princely heart forsoth, is raueshed on suche a godlie and vertuous studie, it can neuer haue condigne and worthie praises, but deserueth alwaies too bee had in great price, estimation, and honour. Who dooeth not know? that Prince which is yeouen vnto the scriptures of God and with a stoute stomake and valiāt heart, both searcheth furth and also defendeth y<sup>e</sup> true doctrine of the Gospell, too bee inrolled in the assemble of Christ. Who dooeth not see? that Prince too bee moost surelye armed, which carieth in his heart the swerd of y<sup>e</sup> spirit, which is the blessed woord of God. Who is ignoraunt? that euer lastyng lyfe consisteth in the knoweledge of God. What Prince woulde not studie to maintaine that, which is written for the health, and saluation of all menne weiyuge with himselfe that a Prince can not deserue, neither by conquest, ciuel policie, nor yet by anye other meane vnder heauen, thys name high or honorable, so wourthely as by the setting forward of Goddes woorde. What young Prince humily defendyng doune intoo him selfe and callyng to memory his bounden dutie woulde not with a glad hearte and a chearfull mynde, gredelye desyre too knowe, enlarge, and amplifie the glory and maiestie of hys derely beloued father? Your grace (forsoth) hath professed God too bee your father: Blessed are you then if you obey vnto hys word, and walke in his waies. Blessed are you,

yf you supporte suche as preache the Gospell. Blessed are you, yf your mind bee full furnished with the testament of Christ, and shew your selfe too bee the most cruel too and enemy agaynst ypocrisie, supersticion, and all papistical phantasies, wher<sup>t</sup> the true religion of God hathe been dusked and defaced these many yeres Blessed are you, if you reade it daye & nighte, that your grace maye knowe what GOD dooeth forbyd you, and euer submit your selfe therunto with seruiceable lowlines chiefly desiring to florysh and decke your mynd with godly knowledge. And most blessed are you, if you apply your self vnto al good workes, & plant surely in your heart the scriptures of Christ, If you thus doo, nether the power of any papistical realme, nor yet of hel can preuaile at any time against your grace. Nowe therefore, with humile hearte, faithfully receiue the swete promises of the Gospel. If you kepe the woordes of the Lorde and cleaue fast vnto them: there is promised you the kingdome of heauen: You are promised a weale publick most riche and welthy You are promised too bee deliuered from the deceiptes of all youre priuie enemyes. You are promised also, too conquere great and mightie nations. Agayne, let your grace bee most fully perswaded in this, that ther was neuer Kyng nor Prince, that prospered whiche tooke parte against Goddes woord, and that the greatest abhominacion that can bee, either for Kyng, Prince, or any other manne, is too forsake the true woord of God. O with howe rebukefull woordes & greuouse iudgement thei be condemned, which dispice & set lytle by the holy Byble & most blessed Testamēt of God, wherin there is contained all the wil & pleasure of our heauēly father toward vs most miserable & ignoraunt wretches Who would not quake, too beholde the terrible feares & threatenynge of God ageinst al suche? Who would not lament & gladly helpe their obstinate blyndenes? Who would not weepe? to heare and reade in how many places, they be openly accursed by the scriptures of Christ. God him self playnely affirmeth, that he wyll sodēly consume them with the breath of his anger. Yea, besides that whoso euer declyneth from the word of God is accursed in all his doynge, whether he be Kyng, or Prynce, riche, or poore, or of what estate soeuer he bee. This fearfull sayng (most excellent Prynce) shulde moue all men to take hede vnto their duties and to praie that gods word maie take place emōgist vs. O that al men would fantasie the scriptures of God, and saye w<sup>t</sup> the vertuous man Iob. Wee will not bee ageynst the woordes of the holy one. Truth it is, God taketh diligent care too haue vs al know his woord. Woulde God therefore, that all wee were now willing to haue the syncere worde of God & all holsom doctrine too go forward. O that all we would consent togyther in the Gospell, brotherly admonishyng, and secretelye prouokynge one an other too true religion & vertue. O that no man would sow emongist the people pernicious doctryne, but with all lowly diligēce and Godlye monition euer prouoke, tempt, and stere them, tyll their heartes were remoued frō their olde dautyng dreames and supersticiō, which haue been long grafted in them thorow popyshe doctrine. By this meane wee shuld euer haue concorde emongist vs, whiche in all thynges is necessary, but most nedefull and expedient in Gods holi woord. Now truely the godlyest thyng that can bee deuysed, for any christian realme, is to haue emongist them one maner and fourme of doctryne, & too trace truely the stepes of God and neuer to seeke any other byways. Who hath not redde in y<sup>e</sup> scriptures? but that realme is endued with godly ornamentes & riches, where all men prospere, go for ward and florishe in gods woord, delectyng day and night in the swete cōsolations of the holy testament. By this way we shuld especially set forth the glory of God, and of our sauour Iesu Christ, if we would reuerently shew one an other that whiche God hath taught vs. Yea & in this doying all men shulde well perceauē that we were the true disciples of Christ, being knitte and coupled fast together in mynde and iudgement, preachyng God with one mouth and also with one assent euer promotyng his gloryous testament. O the good happe and grace of that king or prynce emongist whose subiectes there is such an hole consent and iudgement in the woord of God, for y<sup>t</sup> most assuredly byndeth & adiuigneth y<sup>e</sup> hartes of al subiectes too their kyng. The strength of the Gospell is euen suche in this puinte, that there was neuer man, which did humily receaue it, that would murmoure ageynst his Prince. It teacheth how wyllingly all men shulde obey their kyng. It sheweth verry lyuely and most apertly vnto euery man his ful dutie. It euer prouoketh vs from all

wicked, cursed, and most obstinate disobedience. It euer instructeth men too shewe them selues most lowly, humile, and obesaunt toward their Prynce. Whosoeuer hath tasted fully therof, will declare hym selfe in al thynges, too bee a faithful subiect. Furthermore, it is clearer then the light (most vertuous prince) that it woulde make muche for the weale of this noble realme, yf all mē with heart and mynde, would nowe as well expulse the pernitiuous and deuelyshe doctryne af that Romishe bishop, as his name is blotted î bookes. There is none so ignoraunt, but he knoweth that, thorough hym we were brought into a wōderful blindnes, thorough hym we did sauer of nothyng, but of stynkyng Ydolatrie, through hym we were deceiued with false Ypocrisie. Now let euery blind stiffe hearted, and obstinate creature compare his abhominacion with the gospell, and if he be not shameles, he will abashe to smell of his papistrie, and to walow still in ignoraunce, vn lest he bee priuely confederate and in heart consent with the detestable felowship of al wicked papistes. Now would God all suche men would reduce ageyn their heartes vnto y<sup>e</sup> gospell of Christ, would god they would bee prouoked by some meane to desire knowledge. O that god woulde yeoue them a courageous mynde too reade the gospel, there they shal sone fynde all the venoume of the romishe sort most playnely detected. Forsoth wee see dayly, y<sup>t</sup> lacke of knowledge of the gospel maketh some busserdes runne hedlong on all rockes, daungers, & extreme perilles: yea, and beside that, olde popysh doctryne whiche lyeth folded vp & locked faste in their heartes, doeth so sore blynd thē that they haue neither fauour ne affectiō too printe in their myndes, the expressed coūcels, admonitions, and preceptes of the holy scripture, but too slepe stil in their owne conceites, dreames, & fonde phansies. Wherefore let your dignitie note well this, that all those whiche bee not wylling y<sup>t</sup> gods woord should bee knowen, and that blyndenes should be clean expulsed from all men, whiche be baptised in y<sup>e</sup> blessed bludde of Christ, bewray themselues playne papistes: for in very deede that most deceatful wolfe and graund maister papist with his totiens quotiens, and a pena et culpa blesseth all suche as will bee blynde stil, maintaine his pōpe, drinke of his cuppe of fornication, trust in his pardounes, liue in popery, ypocrisie, and dānable ydolatrie, shut vp the kingdome of heauen, & neuer regarde the gospel. Cōtrarie too this, christ bi his holy Prophete calleth al those blessed y<sup>t</sup> seke for his testimonies, al those his elect & chosē childrē, which turne frō synne, ypocrisie, & ydolatrie, all those goddes y<sup>t</sup> heare his word, yea, & breuely, al those which set it forward honorable mē. & in this puincte your grace shoulde euer beare in mynde, that noble and vertuous kyng Hezekiah, whiche shewed hymselfe very honorable in settīg forward ye woord of God, and therby gotte hym glory and fame immortall, so that nowe he is most highly praysed amongstst all men. Ageyn his subiectes dyd obey his commaundement feynedly with Ypocrisie, but in their heartes they abhorred gods woord. O the miserie that dyd afterwarde sodeinly ensue vpon them, O the wonderfull wrath of God that was poured vpon them, O their great and obstinate blindnes whiche caused them most greuously too be scourged: Their plage was no lesse then too bee vtterly spoyled of their enemies, Their plage was no lesse then to eate one an other: Yea, their plage was no lesse then to eate their owne sonnes and doughters. This calamitie and sorow (most noble prynce) happened them because they dyd not regarde the lawes of God, but tourned too their olde abhominable Ydolatrie, and lightelye esteemed gods holy woord. Wherefore euen now whosoeuer is an enemye to the holy Bible, that is, neither studyng it hymselfe, nor willyng that other men shulde knowe it, he can in no wyse be a right christian man: although he fast, pray, doo almes, & all the good workes vnder heauen. And he that hath suche a mynde, is y<sup>e</sup> most cursed and cruel enemye too god, a playne sower of sedition, and a deuelyshe disquieter of all godly men. For truly those that reade the gospel of Christ, and labour diligētly therein: doo fynde wonderfull rest & quietnes, from all woofull miserie, perturbatiō, and vanities of this world. And surely none but ypocrites or els deuilles would go about too stoppe or allure men from suche a treasure and godly study. And it were conuenient, that all they whiche wyll remayne styll necligent, styffe, & blind: shuld set before their faces the feare of paynes infernall, and if thei haue any grace at all, their spirities ought to be moued: too note the great plages that haue happened the slouthful in gods woord, & those that haue been stubburne ageynst

the setting out of it. There bee a thousand recordes and examples in the holy Bible agaynst such as be farre wyde from knowledge, and lye now walteryng styl in ignoraunce and will not looke vpon the bible. It woulde seme, they hope for a thyng, but their hope is in vaine: For saint Paule plainly writeth the hope of suche ypocrites shall coom<sup>n</sup>

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