

Edmund Becke
(1540?-1560)

PREFACE TO
TWO DIALOGUES OF ERASMUS
[1549?]

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 de syre any thīge, 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 gētlenes 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 bycause 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 & depraue, 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 haue employed in the translaciō hereof I referre it to the iudgement of the lerned sort, whiche cōferryng my translacion with the laten dyaloges, I dowte not wyl condone and pardone my boldnesse, in that that I chalenge the semblable lybertie whiche the translators of this tyme iustlie chalenge. For some here tofore submytting them selfe to seruytude, haue lytle respecte to the obseruacyō 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 obserued or aptlie expressed. The lerned knoweth y^t 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.
