

Courtesy in Discourse

By Desiderius Erasmus

Truly—to conclude this argument—what such people choose to claim for themselves is their own affair. I claim for myself neither learning nor holiness, nor do I trust in my own spirit. I shall merely put forward with simple diligence those considerations which move my mind. If anybody shall try to teach me better, I will not knowingly withstand the truth. If they prefer to rail at one who treats them with courtesy and without invective, rather discoursing than disputing, who will not find them lacking in that spirit of the gospel which is always on their lips? . . . So that if they reply that Erasmus is an old vessel, and is not capable of the new wine of the Spirit which they offer to the world: if they really rate themselves so highly, let them at least treat us as Christ treated Nicodemus and the apostle Gamaliel. Although Nicodemus was ignorant, the lord did not repulse him, because he desired to learn; and the disciples did not reject Gamaliel because he would suspend his judgment until the outcome of the matter should reveal by what spirit it had been done.