

An English Translation of Noël Bédá's *Apologia ... adversus clandestinos Lutheranos (1529)*¹

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A statement of defence by the Paris theologian Noël Bédá against the slanderers of himself and of his book on the errors of Erasmus and Lefèvre, of his meaning in certain propositions in the aforementioned book that were either misunderstood or misquoted, and a postscript on the new errors of Erasmus himself and his and Lefèvre's defenders. Completed at the College of Montaigu, 15 October 1528.

Noël Bédá sends greetings to the pious and truly Christian reader.

1. I had resolved not to depart from that way of thinking, which guided my chosen method of response to certain little books teeming with heavy accusations published clandestinely against me some time ago,² to be like a deaf person who does not hear, and, along with the Desert Father Saint Agathon,³ to be a mute who does not open his mouth. I was prompted to this decision by the example of the King and Prophet Hezekiah, who prohibited his people from ever responding with even a single word to the messengers of impious Sennacherib, who wrongly disparaged God and his people, lest they derive from the answers an even stronger opportunity for blaspheming against God.⁴ This had been my resolution, and without my resistance the persistent urgings of certain friends would have won out in the end to such an extent that I would have promised to attempt, in some sense, what they began to ask me to do over a year and a half ago (although they had not succeeded), but I absolutely refused to do it, partly because I thought

¹ The author wishes to thank Denis L. Drysdall, A.G. Rigg, and Erika Rummel for their patience, guidance, and invaluable assistance in preparing this translation. The original Latin text appears in Mark Crane, "A Scholastic Strikes Back: Noël Bédá's *Apologia ... adversus clandestinos Lutheranos (1529)*," *Opuscula* Vol. 1, No. 3 (2011): 1-12.

² Erasmus wrote four distinct responses to Bédá's *Annotationes*. See Crane, "A Scholastic Strikes Back," 3.

³ Cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ch. 178, which relates the story that St. Agathon kept a pebble in his mouth for three years until he learned how to be silent.

⁴ Cf. 2 Kings 18:36.

it a waste of time and a task too much for me, or rather I saw that it had been done well enough already by others.

2. In a word, friends who love me more ardently than I love myself urged me to write something to purge all of the errors, abuses, false accusations, indignities, and insults discharged and hurled against me by Desiderius Erasmus in various letters, prefaces, and little works, especially both the *Elenchus* and the book he called *Supputationes*. To those friends urging me to do this, I answered in the same way that Augustine answered Petilianus the Donatist, who treated him in the same way that Erasmus has treated me: “If I wanted to repay Erasmus’ insults with insults, what more would we be than two revilers?”⁵ I know (I told myself) the one who said that “Revilers will not possess the Kingdom of Heaven,”⁶ and Christ said “Blessed are you when people revile you.”⁷ If only we could say along with the Apostle, in truth and with a sincere mind, “[when] we are reviled, we bless.”⁸
3. I know (I told myself finally) that Erasmus will yield neither to the spoken nor the written word. Indeed, there is no opinion or point of doctrine so apparent in its truth or falsehood that he could not easily convince his disciples or unwary people of its opposite using his skills in rhetoric and eloquence, which Edward Lee, Diego Lopez de Zuniga, Pierre Cousturier, and certain other writers have demonstrated clearly enough.⁹ They, in fact, have responded to Erasmus on my behalf, so far as it concerns the insults and tricks he knows how to use against others, since he wrote almost the same things about them earlier that he has since written about me. For whoever has dared to refute the writings of Erasmus is himself by the very act made out to be envious and jealous, desperately eager for vainglory, a liar, a false accuser, ungodly, blasphemous, heretical, reckless, arrogant, barbarous, inept, ignorant, totally unskilled, and lacking all learning for which he was earlier esteemed. Indeed, this man has painted me in these and many other colours, to whom beforehand (as the letters he sent to me prove) I was “excellent master,” “excellent sir,” and “most accomplished theologian.”¹⁰ May the good Lord forgive me and Erasmus our sins.
4. Also, besides, in his writings in which he batters me, and to his mind confounds me and tears me up by the roots, whenever he unwittingly comes across a judgement of more prudent people that supports my point, sometimes he denies that I was the author of the censures of his errors, other times he claims that I had written them helped by many people over a period of two years, and most often he claims that in none of the passages was he justly reproved by my censures. When compelled to do so by truth in the *Elenchus*, however, he acknowledged his error or negligence by his own silence on fifty-three propositions (unless I have the number wrong). For, leaving them undefended, he jumped ahead, something that the numbering itself, placed there by Erasmus, shows plainly. That is, he leapt from the first to the third (skipping the second), and from there

⁵ Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petiliani Donatistae, Cirtensis Episcopi, Libri tres*, 3:1.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:10.

⁷ Matthew 5:11.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 4:12.

⁹ For an overview of Lee’s controversies with Erasmus, see Erika Rummel, “Introduction,” *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (ASD) IX-4 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2003), 1–19. An abridged version of this introduction appears in idem, “Introduction,” *Collected Works of Erasmus (CWE)* 72 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), xi–xxvi. On Diego Lopez de Zuniga, see H.J. de Jonge, “Introduction,” *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (ASD) IX-2 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1983), 3–57. On Pierre Cousturier, see Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (Nieuwkoop: De Graff, 1989), 61–79, and passim on the unnamed “others.”

¹⁰ See, in order, Ep. 1571 (salutation), Ep. 1581 (line 42), and Ep. 1620 (salutation).

he skipped ahead to the twelfth, then on to the seventeenth, and so on with the others up to number fifty-three.¹¹ Afterward, having become bolder (to put it mildly) in the *Supputationes*, he passed over none of the propositions untouched and sought to defend his position on each one. Let him, however, be the judge of the merits of this approach.

5. If only at some point, however, the people who are so learned in the humanities and so authoritative that against their decrees Erasmus would count as nothing would study rather more closely whether he has accomplished this with legitimate defences; let them indicate, making it clear to the whole world whether Erasmus has repaired well enough the losses — not to those short passages, but to souls — inflicted on readers of his earlier editions, which in many ways are more harmful than the later ones, since in those later works he had corrected many of his mistakes, with my help, as he sometimes concedes, or with the help of others. Since this never seemed enough to me, because innumerable people have those earlier editions and will not see the more corrected ones, I entreated and advised him resolutely in a letter about what I thought was necessary for his salvation, namely that toward that end he should prepare a little book retracting the full list of his errors (many of which I sent to him in the most friendly manner) in an organized fashion following the custom of Saint Augustine, his father by monastic profession, and publish it throughout the world, and meanwhile that he should refrain from the publication of new books until he had cleaned up those errors that were published earlier.¹² A copy of my letter to Erasmus concerning this brotherly correction, of his response, and, because I felt compelled, of other letters that were exchanged are accurately reproduced below, so that pious readers may know what I felt and continue to feel (by the grace of God) about Erasmus' salvation.¹³
6. In order, however, to refute those things that he wrote (utterly superfluously) against my *censurae* in a tripartite book, I think it suffices for the sake of the upkeep and security of truth if, putting aside entirely the insults with which he wounds me, I will show that, while he tries to make excuses for his earlier errors and to cover up his mistakes, he widely disseminates an infinity of new ones. And so I will merely transcribe Desiderius' new errors concerning faith and morals that I selected, leaving their censure to others (since to his mind I am such an unfair censor) after weighing the notes I shall add. This is as far as I shall go with the cleansing of his insults against me, in which matter I have not followed the entreaties of friends. There was another matter, however, that those same friends were calling to my attention that I did not decline to tackle although it was partly related to the present matter with Erasmus. Let me briefly disclose what that matter is now, by the ways and means that God permits.
7. In the month of June in the year 1525 of our Lord's incarnation, I began composing *censurae* on the commentaries of Jacques Lefèvre on the Pauline Letters and his annotations on the four Gospels, and then on the *Paraphrases* of Desiderius Erasmus on the same four Gospels and all the Apostolic letters. I devoted all of my spare time to this labour for nearly eleven months. I

¹¹ In other words, of the 198 passages that Bédá had excerpted, Erasmus defended 145 of them.

¹² Ep. 1579 (lines 69–88).

¹³ Bédá prints four letters written by Erasmus to him (Eps. 1571, 1596, 1620, and 1679) along with his four replies to those letters (Eps. 1579, 1609, 1642, and 1685). The three extant letters written by Erasmus to Bédá that he does not print here include Eps. 1581, 1610, and 1906. Bédá claims that he omitted Ep. 1581 “especially because its contents are retracted in the second one [i.e., Ep. 1596]; (“ob id praesertim quod per secundam, illam retractare videtur,” fo. CI). Bédá likely omitted Ep. 1610 because it neither responds to one of his letters nor pertains to the controversy between them. James Farge suggests that Bédá might not have received Erasmus' final letter, Ep. 1906; see the introduction to Ep. 1906 in *CWE*.

then submitted the completed work to the Faculty of Theology so that it should now be examined. Later on, after hearing the report of the three masters to whom this business had been commissioned concerning the contents of the book that (no doubt) they had read quite scrupulously, the same Faculty of Theology approved and permitted its publication, moved to this decision for reasons expressed in their declaration on this matter that is found at the beginning of the book itself.¹⁴

8. For certain, it is by no means to be thought that the Faculty of Sacred Theology, by giving its consent and permission, maintains or holds that each proposition in the book has been approved as completely indisputable, and against which no one is permitted to argue, or perhaps that to hold or teach the opposite position of some of them is not approved by their authority; God forbid! To be sure, [the faculty] has both learned and knows to ascribe that honour to the books of the Holy Bible alone, along with Augustine, who, writing in the prologue to the third book of *On the Trinity*, said: “Do not attach your self to my writings as if they were canonical scripture.”¹⁵ Therefore, Erasmus has laboured in vain to a great extent when he attempted to convince the world that the evidence laid down in this matter is not supported by the truth. He thought, or pretends to believe, that mine was going to be a work of that kind, as he himself portrayed it with incredible acrimony using his aggressive pen in frequent oaths, stirred-up writings, and expressions of abhorrence, as if in censuring disputations of this type one must pause over an oath of Erasmus as if it were an oracle or as if I gave account of the whole controversy with that sort of detestable swearing.
9. Clearly, in their judgements of new writings to be published, theologians especially assess whether the work is profitable for Christianity, whether the argument has sufficient weight and its reasoning has suitable strength at all, whether the writer aims to defend truth and eliminate error, whether the work itself contains nothing openly objectionable, or something that is not strong enough on its own can be drawn to good sense, but is such that everything can be accepted on the grounds of its own probability. If they find this to be so, they do what the church and the fathers have always done in matters of this type since the earliest days of the church, namely they permit, praise, and promote the reading and study of writers of that type, for thus at the Council of Rome held long ago under Saint Gelasius many of the writings of doctors were commended,

¹⁴ This is the text of the faculty’s approval that appeared in the Paris and Cologne editions:

The attestation made by the consensus of the Faculty of Theology of Paris on the matter of the publication of these books.

Whereas many errors were said to have been discovered in the commentaries that Jacques Lefèvre composed on the letters of Paul and the Gospels, and likewise many errors in the paraphrases that Erasmus made on the New Testament; and Master Noël Bédà, a theologian of the Paris faculty had written some things to challenge those errors, which he presented to the faculty following the established custom, so that they could be reviewed by its delegates; after the books were read, and a report on those things that were discovered in Bédà’s writings was given to the faculty by those delegated to this matter, the faculty approved and permitted these books to be printed and put up for sale, since they can be read usefully and piously, inasmuch as they contain many things that are quite profitable for declaring and defending the truth and for refuting perverse teachings. This same faculty decided this with respect to Lefèvre’s books on 15 February 1526 in the Church of St. Mathurin, and with respect to Erasmus’ books on 16 May 1526, in the College of the Sorbonne, which agrees with the same decrees of the same faculty, which are kept on file by the printer.

¹⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate* III, *prooem.*

likewise many were condemned. The church did not aim by its authority to give the weight of approval to every single word of anyone (as appears from the text of the decretal, the greater part of which Gratian related), except the letter of blessed Leo to Flavian, concerning which the decretal has this: "Likewise it, namely the church, accepts the letter of the blessed Pope Leo addressed to Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople. If some unlearned person disputes even a single *iota* of the text and does not accept it in all ways venerably, let him be *anathema*."¹⁶ The church and the order of theologians only accept other works (whatever writings of the holy fathers and doctors) that are conducive to piety and that can be read fruitfully and that do not aim at any perverse intention.

10. For in such works what must be considered, above all, is the writer's intention: if the author, knowingly or not, aims toward some evil end, or the author's writings contain many things useful, new, or subtle and pleasing to many, or strange and extravagant ideas, as do nearly all of the works of Luther, Erasmus, Lefèvre, and the works recently published by others who "theologize"¹⁷ using humanistic arts; these works ought to be suppressed completely and not permitted to be published. Where, however, the intention of the writer is simple and straightforward and the work is conducive to the life of the church, since perhaps it contains nothing against which an objection can be made, if they discover a few passages that give some misguided sense and another that gives a correct sense, though perhaps it is not entirely sound but agrees with the writer's understanding, then the doctors are accustomed to draw the particular passage to a correct sense without rejecting the sound point; for just as the pious intention of the author deserves this, so too the reviewers must do this for the sake of the public good. I certainly think mine indeed are such, unless wiser men have a better opinion.
11. Indeed, if the writer's purpose is varied and there are many things in the writing worthy of being read that perhaps do not seem to match the content of books written by other people, even though they contain some harmful things, they can be allowed to appear once a prefatory note of caution has been added in the same way that it was to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* as recorded in the aforementioned decree of the Council of Rome presided over by Gelasius. This is what it says: "Although he falls flat in the first book of his narration and later wrote a book (namely the sixth) praising and excusing the schismatic Origen, because of the nevertheless unique account of events that is useful for instruction, we decree that Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronica* and also his books of *Ecclesiastical History* should not be refused altogether."¹⁸ Acting in like fashion, our Paris Faculty of Theology has refused steadfastly many works of writers submitted to it for approval to publish; likewise the faculty has allowed some works to be published but first ordered those things that seemed less correct to be corrected.
12. And so, following the aforementioned aim, and after the approval had been given, my annotations on Lefèvre and *censurae* against Erasmus were at length published, printed first on the press of Josse Bade in Paris and second shortly afterward in the famous German city of Cologne. When the supporters of Lefèvre and Erasmus in our midst, that is lovers of Lutheran teachings (although being fearful of our Lord the King and his officials, they curse the name of Luther for all they are worth), examined these editions, they became vehemently stirred up and indignant that Bédá had dared to write openly and so expressly revealing the concealed errors of Lefèvre and Erasmus, the former who had obtained international fame for philosophy and the latter for eloquence. Accordingly, they examined my book assiduously to see if by chance some

¹⁶ *Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*.

¹⁷ A derogatory term for those who apply humanistic philology to the study of the Bible.

¹⁸ *Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*.

things might show up with which they could find fault. At first, they boasted that they had detected and marked nearly ninety mistaken articles in my writings, which they were going to make public before long. Afterward, however, considering all these things more carefully, they reduced the number greatly to thirty and with their propitious prayers secretly circulated in manuscript thirty heretical (as they called them) articles excerpted from Bédá's assertions, claiming to their communal delight that they had defeated their adversary. Finally, they limited the thirty propositions of this type to twelve composed in the Latin tongue, and twelve in French, which in most ways are the same as the aforementioned twelve articles in Latin, since, from close inspection of them, one can match up the excerpts in each one.¹⁹

13. And so out of my labours of this type, they passed on to printers to have printed two dozen propositions with various arguments, in which they fussed to the utmost of their ability to show that the propositions were to be condemned. At length, they were printed, but after they were printed they did not put them up for sale, for neither was it recorded where they were printed, nor was the name of the printer or the bookseller indicated, nor that of the authors, but rather they distributed them for free in secret to their co-conspirators near and far, in order, however, to bring injury to myself and many other Catholics through these wonderful arts. They were found both among courtiers and among many people in many regions of the kingdom after such a short time that the matter was even brought to the attention of our Lord the most Christian King.
14. Hearing, however, that not a few heresies were said to have been encountered in the books in which I exposed the errors of Lefèvre and Erasmus, the pious King was not quick to believe it, but having opened an investigation he sent the book of twelve articles published against me in Latin to the whole University of Paris, ordering that, after the matter and all of the issues relating to it had been more carefully examined, he should be advised on the merit of the whole affair, professing he was the kind of prince who desired, in the manner of his ancestors, above all to have every heresy and erroneous doctrine eliminated from his kingdom, as befits the most Christian King, and to proceed according to the law against people (whoever they might be) who promote, favour, or protect false teachings against faith and morals among the people of his dominion.²⁰
15. The university and all its masters, his very devoted servant, undertook the duty given to them by the most Christian King with due reverence and thanks to God, who had placed such a holy goal in the heart of the King, and wholeheartedly began to make time for the execution of the commissions. Upon hearing about this, I rejoiced greatly, hoping that it would quickly come about that the truth would come to light. On account of which, in order that this might come about, I petitioned most strenuously to the best of my ability in well-attended meetings of the whole university, I willingly submitted myself and all of my writings to their judgement, and [I] professed that I always was and am ready to follow the will of the doctors and masters of the university and to do whatever they should decide about me. With as much urgency as I could, I also arranged among all of the faculties of the university involved in the matter to pursue the

¹⁹ The Latin edition of the pamphlet was entitled *Duodecim Articuli infidelitatis magistri Natalis Bedae*. Although long attributed to the French nobleman Louis de Berquin, it is more likely the work of Bédá's fellow doctor of theology, Jacques Merlin. See Farge, *CWE* 13, 435n7. No copy of the French version survives. Bédá excerpts seven short passages from the French pamphlet, which he says differ from the Latin. See fos. L^r-LIII^v.

²⁰ For the French text of Francis I's letter to the Faculty of Theology, see P.S. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami VII*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928) 233-35. An English translation of that letter appears in the introduction to Ep. 1902 in *CWE* 433-36.

matter with which they had been charged. They gave their attention to it and spent many months on the matter. Since the current matter particularly pertains to the Faculty of Theology, as it concerns divine law of which they are the teachers, after many meetings among themselves, as I gather, the other members of the university decided to wait for the judgement of the Faculty of Theology, which on account of many other impediments and business has not yet pronounced on the matter. I alone, however, have pursued this matter persistently, not the parties opposed, who, foreseeing that things will not turn out as they had hoped, have delayed the decision of the case secretly through friends, by all means of avoidance. I think that is because nobody came forth who would dare to confess his authorship of the one book or the other.

16. For Doctor Pierre Caroli denied that it was him, and Louis de Berquin (whom many prudent men, along with me, vehemently and for more than one reason believe initiated this matter with the help of the more-than-Lutheran Doctor Amedee Maigret, who recently died in Germany, whither he had fled) also denied it in my presence, compelled under oath to speak and make a statement before the highest judges. When asked whether he was the author of the aforementioned books or had prepared them for publication, after a delay was granted by the judges so that he could inspect the books, he responded by writing in his own hand that he was neither the author nor the publisher, though he added many things that made a display of his insincerity more than his modesty and that were not relevant to my question.²¹ I began to have doubts about what should be done next for the good of the Christian religion, which I referred back to my friends and discussed with them.
17. For their part, they suggested even more ardently than usual that I should defend the cause of truth in a little book so that the given scandal raised by the empty talk of the Lutherans could, at least in part, be lessened. For while they assert in public places and in meetings that Bédac raved even more wildly and absurdly in attacking Lefèvre and Erasmus than they did in their attacks upon him, many petty and unwary men who are credulous accept this present cause of offence, and their consciences are harmed, and when those who are more prudent hear such things they are grieved by it. According to my friends, it would be easy to counter these evils with some succinct declaration of my assertions that the authors of the aforementioned have railed at.
18. Even though I conceded that these facts were probably true, and did not give up hope for the benefit that would come from an explanation of my work and refutation of their objections to it, nonetheless many things discouraged me from doing so, and at my friends' advice I offered these considerations as an excuse for myself. Moreover, I said that both of the notorious pamphlets were written not only against me but also against others, even many of the greatest or certainly well-known men, indeed against the very order of doctors of theology and in such a criminal manner that it is not worthy of a response but is to be overcome by simple silence and patience, especially since, as I said earlier, nobody had dared to come forth who would admit to being the author of such accursed writings, and those who were thought to be their authors, questioned both in court and informally, continuously denied under oath that these "distinguished" little works were their own. They denied this for good reason, for they saw the danger they faced if they were discovered. What else have they proved themselves to be, in fact, than partisans and defenders of heresies and those who are in error and enemies of those Catholics who (as they must) strive to extirpate these harmful teachings from the church and especially from this most

²¹ On Doctors of Theology Caroli and Maigret, see entries in James K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of the Church, 1500-1536* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980) 65-71 and 292-296. On Berquin, see idem, "Les procès de Louis de Berquin: Épisodes dans la lutte du Parlement de Paris contre l'absolutisme royal," *Histoire et archives* 18 (2005): 49-77.

Christian kingdom? In this they also prove themselves to be enemies of our Lord the King and kingdom, whatever justifications they may use to seek favour for themselves. The glory of the King and the prosperity of the kingdom cannot stand without strong justice, and a pure worship of God and the Saints, which cannot survive where there is impure faith or where pure faith is opposed with impunity. The punishment the laws provide for men of this sort, namely the partisans and defenders of heresies, is clear.

19. What if the hidden producers of such writings should contend that they did not favour or promote heresies but were driven by a zeal for truth (just as I feel and have testified about myself) to examine Bédá's books, with the result that they took care to condemn the discovered errors contained in them? If they are speaking truthfully, why did they not first approach me in a brotherly manner, namely by advising me in the same way I frequently advised Lefèvre and Erasmus? Furthermore, why have they not come forward if they believed it was something worthy of commendation? But why do I say these things? By what right or according to what touchstone do they harry me? Why do they scream with such insulting language against me, seeing that I have practically been compelled to undertake the protection of truth, even if there were a few errors in those twelve articles that they plucked out? If they were stirred up by hatred of error, why did they not cry aloud with me against the books of Lefèvre and Erasmus, in which I discussed and challenged 352 articles against Lefèvre, and 198 against Erasmus, for a total of 550 articles? It is clear that a great many of these passages cannot be defended by manifest reason, and many people in this otherwise most happy kingdom have been led into error, and some have perished on account of them.
20. I know some people have been inspired to come back to their senses, and many more have been saved from error through my writings, in which they attacked only twelve, at any rate not more than twenty, propositions. Here, clearly by way of solace, I can borrow the words of Saint Augustine and say to these men:

I say to those present or absent, to whom I have become an enemy for speaking the truth, and to whom my counsel seems onerous, in seeking whose benefit I am obliged to oppose their will: do not be like a horse and a mule, which have no understanding. For these beasts of burden attack with hoof and tooth those by whom they are cared for; you are not merciful to me, I am not merciful to you; you oppose me, I oppose you; you resist me, I resist you. The struggle makes us equal, but the cause makes us different. You are an enemy to the doctor, I am an enemy to the disease. You are an enemy to my diligence, I am an enemy to your illness. I was saying to my friends, "They were paying back evil in return for good. I, however, was praying," says the Psalmist.²²

In addition, men of complete faith who are potent with true wisdom were not offended by my writings, which I can show both through letters sent to me from the highest theologians in Germany and other places concerning these matters, and through the public debates of learned people, who thanked God, rejoicing that he aided me in this business. Finally, I would say, along with Saint Augustine, "Let those who wish to do so believe that I prefer to spend my time reading rather than writing."²³ Elsewhere, responding to certain questions by Dulcitus, Augustine wrote thus: "What I must confess to your good nature is that I love to learn more than to teach. For this we are also advised by the Apostle James speaking in his first chapter: 'Let

²² Augustine, Sermon 383:2.

²³ Augustine, *De trinitate* III, *prooem.*

every man be swift to hear but slow to speak.' The beauty of truth must invite us to learn; the necessity of love, however, must compel us to teach. Wherefore it is better to pray that this necessity that makes one man the teacher of another should pass away."²⁴

21. More than once in other places the blessed Father Augustine also wrote similar things that (God knows it) I embrace with all my heart and approve heartily from practical experience. I can only be induced to write what needs to be published with great difficulty, both because, on the one hand, I have almost no memory of the things that I read (which is absolutely worthwhile for anyone setting out to write) and, on the other hand, I have multiple duties, and my nature flees from this task. It is for these reasons that up until this month of October 1528 I have not assented to those who have urged me to clear myself in writing with respect to those articles, especially the twelve published in Latin. For although I had no doubt that I would have to devote a modest amount of work to this project, nevertheless I knew that I would really have to work hard to narrate the matters presented above, and I would have very much preferred that this matter be decided by a judgement of the whole University of Paris, I who am certain of my interpretations, which would be approved by any good theologian. Although I am still not sure whether I should do it or not, and according to many people's opinion, the necessity of brotherly love seems to call for it, I am giving up my excuses and my tranquility, and I am conceding to the request made by my friends, judging that perhaps those things that I am about to write will be helpful for informing the minds of those who are assigned to pass judgement. I will say nothing at all, however, about the abuses and attacks inflicted upon me through accusations and insults. Forgiving the injustice from these writers with all my heart, I am mindful of the words of King David, when he says, "If I have returned evil to those who rewarded me, then I shall deservedly fall empty at the hands of my enemies."²⁵ May these failures of the faith, arising as much through the publication of a certain creed with its excessive abuse of things divine, as from anything else, be of some help toward its purpose, so that by their service they may give back what they owe. I shall simply, although in a very few words, touch on the business of truth.

²⁴ Augustine, Ep. 143. Bédá quotes the same passage in Ep. 1579.

²⁵ Psalm 7:5.