

## 4) Great Apostasy Brief on the Glorification of Mythology

By Richard Joseph Michael

“I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”  
(Exodus 20:2-3)

All of the scholastics also glorified mythology by either sins of commission, omission, or association. For example, all of the scholastics either promoted or did not sufficiently condemn the following things or did not sufficiently denounce those who promoted them:

1. The desecration of Catholic places with images that glorified devils, idols, and the false gods and false religions of mythology.<sup>1</sup>
2. The study of the un-purged works of the philosophers on logic, dialectics, rhetoric, and grammar, which thus contained examples that glorified mythology<sup>2</sup>
3. The study of mythological works as a means to learn about faith or attain virtues
4. They glorified false gods in their everyday conversations

Just as Renaissance art in desecrated places mixed the true God and true religion with false gods and false religions, so also the nominal Catholic's way of thinking, acting, and teaching mixed the true God and true religion with false gods and false religions:

*The History of Popes*, by the apostate Ludwig Pastor, 1891-1898:<sup>3</sup>

“The more earnest of these men lamented, among other evils, the extravagances which some of their brethren allowed themselves in their discourses. We hear of preachers whose sermons were overcharged with vain learning, or full of hair-splitting theological questions... The newly revived pagan philosophy was too often brought forward in the pulpit at the expense of Christianity. Passages from the works of heathen poets and teachers replaced the customary quotations from the Fathers. The glamour of the new learning obscured the old simple doctrines, and heathen mythology was mixed up with Christian dogma.” (v. 5, Intro., s. 2, pp. 180-181)

“Though it is an error to consider all ranks of Italian society in the fifteenth century as tainted with the spirit of paganism, we must admit that the baneful element in the Renaissance took fearful hold on the upper classes. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? The seductive doctrines of Epicurus, and the frivolous, worldly wisdom of the Rome of Augustus was far more attractive than Christian morality. To a pleasure-loving and corrupt generation, the vain mythology of heathenism was infinitely more congenial than the Gospel of a crucified Saviour and the religion of self-denial and continence. Many ecclesiastical dignitaries also unhappily show undue favour to the false Humanism...

“The race of *dilettanti* and free-thinkers looked upon the doctrinal teaching of the Church as a thing quite apart from their sphere. If in their writings they invoked the heathen gods and advocated the principles of the ancient philosophers, they also took pains from time to time to profess their submission to the Creeds and were skillful in throwing a veil over the antagonism between the two...

“The strange medley of heathen and Christian words and thoughts that prevailed in the age of the Renaissance is notorious. The Church authorities were not severe on transgressions of this kind... The Humanists, in their horror of sinning against Ciceronian Latinity, endeavoured to express Christian ideas in antique phrases... Instead of calling on the one God, he should on some occasion say ‘Ye Gods,’ or if a poet, instead of imploring Divine grace, should beg the favour of Apollo and the Muses... Accordingly,... Ciriaco of Ancona

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<sup>1</sup> For information on this point, see RJMI *Great Apostasy Brief on the Desecration of Catholic Places* and RJMI book *The Desecration of Catholic Places*.

<sup>2</sup> For information on this point, see RJMI book *The Hellenization of Christianity by the Anti-Church Fathers and Scholastics: ... In the 11th century philosophers' un-purged works on logic, dialectics, rhetoric, and grammar were studied.*

<sup>3</sup> The apostate Dr. Ludwig Pastor was the Professor of History in the University of Innsbruck. He wrote these books from 1891 to 1898, which are drawn from the secret archives of the Vatican and other original sources. Authorized and approved by Apostate Antipope Leo XIII. Edited by Fredrick Ignatius Antrobus. Publisher: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & CO., LTD. London, 1901.

chose Mercury for his patron saint, and on his departure from Delos addressed a written prayer to him, his contemporaries were not the least scandalized, but contented themselves with laughing at his enthusiasm, and singing of him as ‘the new Mercury,’ and ‘immortal as his Mercury.’<sup>4</sup>...

“From the beginning, men were never wanting, who raised their voices against the deadly poison of the false Humanism. One of the first in Italy to indicate its pernicious influence on education was the Dominican Giovanni Dominici... In his celebrated Treatise on the order and discipline of Family Life, written very early in the 15th century, he denounces, with all the energy of his ardent nature, the system ‘which lets youth and even childhood become heathen rather than Christian; which teaches the names of Jupiter and Saturn, of Venus and Cybele rather than those of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; which poisons minds that are still tender and powerless by sacrifice to the false gods; and brings up wayward nature in the lap of unbelief.’<sup>5</sup> In yet stronger terms does Giovanni Dominici express himself in a writing which has but recently been brought to light, and which is dedicated in courteous language to the celebrated Chancellor of Florence, Coluccio Salutato. Its primary object was to warn him against being seduced by the charms of the...Renaissance but at the same time, it aimed at protecting youth in general from the questionable elements contained in the classic literature, and at counteracting its perversion and misuse. The Dominican condemns those who give themselves up with blind and deluded zeal to heathen learning and are thus led to depreciate the Christian Religion... In his horror at the new heathenism, which was rising before his eyes, he [said]...it is more useful to a Christian to plough the ground than to study the heathen authors!” (v. 1, Intro. pp. 38-39, 49-50)

“The eminent men, and to a considerable extent the institutions of classical times, were preferred to those of the middle ages, and the difference in religion seemed of no moment in the absorbing desire to emulate these heroes of ancient history. Christian dogma, and all that was the product of the medieval spirit, appeared to the fanatical classicism of the Renaissance, barbarous and out of date. Regardless of the essential difference which the Church maintained between heathen and Christian ideas, they jumbled the two together, and delighted in disguising Christian thought in the language of the ancients. God is called Jupiter, even Dante goes so far as to call him ‘il Sommo Giove.’ Heaven is Olympus, the Saints are Gods, excommunication is spoken of as *Dirae*. Wherever the Humanists touch Christianity they paganise it. The poet Publio Gregorio of Citta de Castello invokes the aid of the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin, and the Muses, all in the same breath. He declares that ‘Mary opens and closes the doors of Olympus.’ Pontano goes still farther. He calls a Saint not only *Divus* but *Deus*, he identifies the Angels with the ancient *Genii*, and his description of the state of souls after death can hardly be distinguished from the classical abode of the Shades. The flippancy of some of these Humanists even went so far as to see nothing incongruous in linking sanctity with obscenity. A collection of poems in MS. of the time of Alexander VI contains a series of epigrams, the first of which are in honour of Our Lady and various holy women, after which, without a break or observation of any kind, they pass on to celebrate the most famous courtesans of the day. ‘The Saints of God and the votaries of Venus are calmly catalogued together as distinguished women.’

“It is not too much to say that amongst the votaries of the...Renaissance, the imitation of the ancients amounted to a mania. ‘The tyrant posed as *Cæsar* and Augustus, the republicans as Brutus, the captains of the mercenary bands strove to appear like Scipio and Hannibal, the philosophers aped Aristotle and Plato, the literati mimicked Virgil and Cicero.’<sup>6</sup>

“In common with many of the works of art of that period the writings of [so-called] Christian Humanists, like Battista, Spagnolo, and Jacopo Sannazaro, present a most curious medley of paganism and Christianity. Sannazaro, in the beginning of the first book of his famous poem on the birth of Christ, invokes the Angels and the Muses together. Heaven is usually called Olympus; the first person of the Holy Trinity, the Thunderer, the Ruler of Olympus, and the King of the Gods. Christ is hymned as the Father of Gods and men, Mary as the Mother and Queen of the Gods. The poet indeed takes pains to point out that historical

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<sup>4</sup> Footnote †: “Voigt, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., 287. Ciriaco’s prayer begins *Artium mentis ingenii facundiaëque pater alme Mercuri, viarum itinerumque optime dux*, etc. O. Jahn publishes it in the *Bull dell Inst. di corr. Arch.*, 1861, p. 183. We may remark here that Ghiberti’s enthusiasm for the Greeks went so far that he counted time not from the Christian era, but from the Olympiad. Rio, i., 315.”

<sup>5</sup> Footnote †: “Salvi, 135, 136. See Reumont, *Kl. Schriften*, 16 *et seq.*”

<sup>6</sup> Footnote †: “Villari, Machiavelli, I., 22.”

Christianity has cut away the ground from under the feet of the fables of mythology, but he perpetually introduces pagan myths into his representations of Christian subjects. In describing the miracles of Christ, he declares that mortal diseases yield to His word, the wrath of Diana is assuaged, the furies of Tartarus are put to flight, and those possessed with devils are healed. Perhaps this infatuation is even stronger in another poet, Pietro [apostate anticardinal] Bembo. His epitaphs are purely heathen. In his hymn to S. Stephen, God the Father appears in His glory in the midst of Olympus, Christ is 'the lofty Heros,' Mary, a radiant Nymph. His letters are full of similar displays of bad taste [RJMI: of idolatry and blasphemy]; and he frequently expresses himself in the same manner even when writing as private secretary to Leo X. The inscription on a tank in the Capitol, which was restored by the Conservators of Rome, reads like one of those of the olden times: 'We have prepared the vessel; do thou, O Jupiter, fill it with rain and be gracious to those who dwell by thy rock.'<sup>7</sup> The increasing practice of choosing Greek and Roman names at baptisms is another significant fact. Petrarch spoke of his friends as Laelius, Socrates, Simonides; and he himself liked to be called Cicero and named his daughter Tullia. One of the Roman nobles christened his sons Agamemnon, Achilles, and Tydeus; a painter named his son Apelles and his daughter Minerva. 'Even the courtesans of Rome chose names which had been borne by their predecessors in old times, such as Lucretia, Cassandra, Porcia, Penthesisilea. All the relations of life and all offices and ceremonies were classicised as far as possible.'<sup>8</sup> ...Pedants delighted in calling Town Councillors 'Patres Conscripti,' Nuns 'Virgines Vestales,' every Saint 'Divus' or 'Deus.' ...Paul Jovius followed the mode more or less...and thus...we find in his writings Cardinals entitled 'Senatores,' the Cardinal Dean 'Princeps Senatus,' excommunications 'Dirae,' the Carnival 'Lupercalia,' etc...

"The most objectionable of these was the attempt to introduce the heathenism of the elegant Humanistic style into theological science. We find such an attempt in the Compendium of Dogma published in 1503 by Paulus Cortesius, Secretary to Alexander VI and later Apostolical Protonotary. Cortesius certainly takes his stand on the principles of the Church, and refutes the false conceptions of the heathen philosophers; but he is convinced that Christian dogma cannot be rightly understood or explained without the aid of the wisdom of the ancient sages. Thus the pagan garment in which he wraps his dogma is undoubtedly a source of peril [RJMI: of idolatry, heresy, and blasphemy]. Christ is called the God of thunder and lightning; Mary, the mother of the Gods; the departed souls, the Manes. S. Augustine is extolled as the God of theologians and the Pythic seer of Theology, and Thomas Aquinas as the Apollo of Christianity. When he comes to the Fall of Man, he introduces the subject by announcing that now he is going to treat of the Phaethon of the human race. Hell is described as exactly like the ancient Tartarus with the three rivers Kocythus, Avernus, and Styx." (v. 5, Intro., s. 2, pp. 140-144)

"In one sermon he [Savonarola] said—"The only good that Plato and Aristotle did, was to provide a good many arguments which can be turned against heretics. They and the other philosophers are fast in hell. Any old woman knows more about Faith than Plato. It would be good for the Faith if many of these seemingly precious books could be destroyed.' On another occasion he declared that only a very few should occupy themselves with learning. All that was needed was a small body of intellectual athletes to refute heretical sophistries, the rest should confine their studies to grammar, good morals, and religious instruction."<sup>9</sup> (v. 5, Intro., s. 2, pp. 193-194)

"The streets which formed the processional route were decorated with silken draperies, either worked in gold or painted, mingled with garlands of foliage and bright flowers. All the windows were full of spectators, while crowds thronged round the houses, keeping up their cry of 'Leo!' or 'Palle, palle!' The lower clergy of the city, in order to pay their homage to the Supreme Head of the Church [Leo X], clustered round the beautifully adorned altars which were set up at intervals along the streets. In marked contrast with these were the antique statues which had been placed in front of some of the houses. In still greater contrast were the numerous triumphal arches, which 'after the manner of ancient Rome,' as says

<sup>7</sup> Footnote †: "Forcella, I., 32; Gregorovius, VIII, 272 *seq.*, ed. 3, where many other instances are to be found, especially of the time of Leo X, to which we shall recur in a future volume."

<sup>8</sup> Footnote \*: "Schneegans, 119, and Burckhardt, I., 291, ed. 3. Here also are to be found various burlesques and productions of poetical Maccaronis, satirising the extravagant classicism of the Humanists. On all this, especially on Folengo, see a future volume."

<sup>9</sup> Footnote \*: "Burckhardt, II., 247, ed. 3."

Giovio, were the chief adornment of the city on this festal occasion. On the very first of these, which had been set up by Raffaello Petrucci, Bishop of Grosseto and Castellan of St. Angelo, facing the bridge already mentioned, there could be seen Apollo and his lyre: though alongside of him was a representation of Christ delivering the keys to St. Peter...

“The most artistic arches had been erected by the wealthy bankers. That put up by Agostino Chigi, near his house in the Via del Banco di Santo Spirito, surpassed all the others. On it was the inscription: ‘To Leo the Tenth, the happy restorer of peace!’ But, as befitted the worldly mind of Chigi, nearly all the figures on his arch were pagan: Apollo, Mercury, Pallas, nymphs and centaurs. Here, in golden letters, was to be read the satire, so soon to become famous, referring to the reigns of Alexander VI and Julius II, which at the same time expressed the hopes held by the humanists as regarded Leo X:

*First Venus ruled; then came the god of war;  
Now, great Minerva, it is thy day that dawns.*

“The celebrated goldsmith, Antonio di San Marino, responded to this in a way quite in harmony with the worldliness of Rome. He placed a statue of Venus over his house with this inscription:

*Mars has reigned; Pallas has followed; but the reign of Venus will never  
end.<sup>10</sup>*

“Italian verses also could be seen under various statues.<sup>11</sup> The arch put up in the Piazza di Parione by Ferdinando Ponzetti, the clerical chamberlain, was decorated with Perseus, Apollo, Moses, Mercury, and Diana, in addition to which was a representation of Cardinal de’ Medici’s rescue at the battle of Ravenna. No one was scandalized by this mixture of Christianity and paganism. One Bishop, afterwards Cardinal Andrea della Valle, adorned his arch with nothing but antique statues: Apollo, Bacchus, Mercury, Hercules, Venus. A Roman patrician, Evangelista de’ Rossi, had the largest collection of antique sculptures displayed for show at his house. Innumerable were the inscriptions which hailed Leo as the patron of learning. One floral arch at the Pellicceria bore the inscription: ‘Destiny has been fulfilled!’ The house of the Genoese banker, Sauli, had erected a truly artistic arch, from which a boy stepped forth and recited Latin verse. An inscription on this arch hailed the Pope as the day-star of peace... The humanists, of whom the new Pope had been, even as a Cardinal, the friend and patron, proclaimed on all sides that now the iron age had given way to the golden.” (v. 7, c. 1, pp. 40-42)

(For in depth information, see RJMI book *The Great Apostasy: ...Mixed the True God and True Religion with false gods and false religions.*)

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

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<sup>10</sup> Footnote \*: “Reumont, III, 2, 57. The verse, ‘Olim habuit Cypria sua tempora,’ is by M. Ant. Casanova. Cf. F. Volpicella, *Héroica M. A. Casanovae* (rare *Nozze-Publ.*), Napoli, 1867, 15 and 37. The meaning attributed by the contemporaries to the inscriptions is explained by Fr. Novellus, *Vita Leonis X*, Cod. Barb., lat. 2273, fol. 61, Vatican Library.”

<sup>11</sup> Footnote \*: “Penni in Cancellieri, 77.”