

# The Catholic Way to Read about or View Idols, False Gods, and False Religions

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## The Catholic way to read about idols, false gods, and false religions

Idols, as used in this article, means images of false gods. Every god but the Catholic God is a false god. Every religion but the Catholic religion is a false religion. And philosophy, in the most common meaning of the word, is a false religion and thus philosophers are either pagans or formal heretics if they are baptized. (See RJMI article “The Two Meanings of Philosophy and Philosopher.”)

Any true and serious study of the history of mankind cannot leave out the idols, false gods, and false religions of the nations. Hence Catholics are allowed to learn about these evil things for historical or educational purposes or to refute them as long as they do not glorify them. Just remember HER, “H” for historical, “E” for educational, and “R” for refute.

The work of a Catholic evangelist is to learn about the idols, false gods, and false religions of non-Catholics in order to refute their idols, false gods, and false religions and to preach to them the one true God, the Catholic God, and the one true religion, the Catholic religion:

“The just considereth seriously the house of the wicked, that he may withdraw the wicked from evil.” (Prv. 21:12)

St. Paul learned about the many idols, false gods, and false religions in Athens before he attempted to convert the pagan Greeks:

“But Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For passing by, and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: To the unknown God. What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you.”<sup>1</sup> (Acts 17:22-23)

The Bible itself teaches about the many idols, false gods, and false religions of the nations. The best way for Catholics to learn about idols, false gods, and false religions (which includes philosophy) is from Catholic sources and thus from the perspective of the Catholic faith which condemns and hates all idols, false gods, and false religions, such as by learning about them from St. Augustine’s *City of God* but not from the scholastics because they are not Catholic.

But many times non-Catholic sources must be studied. Before the non-Catholic sources can be made available to the general public, they must be censored to remove immorality and immodesty and must contain a Catholic warning or commentary in a prominent place condemning the idols, false gods, and false religions.

However, a Catholic is only allowed to read or view the uncensored works of non-Catholics that deal with idols, false gods, false religions, or even the true religion (such as works by Protestants teaching about the Catholic religion) if he has a dispensation. A Catholic must not be given a dispensation to read or view these uncensored works by

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul is not saying that they worship the one true God. He is saying that “This unknown god whom you do not know I will make known to you so that you can know and worship the one true God and thus have a hope to save your souls.” (See RJMI book *The Salvation Dogma: Athens’ unknown god.*)

non-Catholics if he is not well grounded in the Catholic faith—dogmas, catechism, the Catholic Bible, and refutations of the work he wants to read or view. And he must be living a good Catholic life, meaning that he must be obeying not only all the commandments on the faith but also all of God's commandments on morals.

A Catholic can know that he does not glorify idols, false gods, or false religions if he reads a book or views a video that deals with them and he hates, abhors, and mocks the idols, false gods, or false religions. Hence his reasons for reading the book or viewing the video are for historical or educational purposes or to refute them. However, if he loves, likes, respects, honors, admires, or exalts the idols, false gods, or false religions, then he glorifies them and thus is an idolater and a formal heretic. Therefore, to read about idols, false gods, or false religions to be enlightened or edified or enamored or obsessed by them is to glorify them and thus is idolatry and formal heresy. This is what the scholastics do with philosophy and philosophers. They glorify them either by using the non-dogmatic and philosophical method of speaking, inquiring, questioning, and reasoning or by being obsessed with explaining the teachings and revelations of the philosophers or by presenting their teachings as if they are of great value or even necessary in coming to the understanding of spiritual truths.

### **The Catholic way to view idols and false gods**

Images of idols and false gods could be displayed in books (such as catechisms, Bible dictionaries, or historical books) or in a movie, documentary, or museum as long as the idols or false gods are presented in a negative light and all immodesty and pornography is censored. To be presented in a negative light means the idols or false gods must be condemned in a prominent place within the book, movie, documentary, or museum in which the idols or false gods are displayed.

However, any presentation of images of idols and false gods in a positive or neutral light, without a Catholic commentary condemning them, is forbidden because it does not condemn them. By not condemning them, it glorifies them. Anything short of condemning an idol or a false god is to glorify it. And images of idols and false gods that are immodest or pornographic are also forbidden even if they are presented in a negative light.

Hence, without a dispensation a Catholic is banned from reading or viewing an uncensored book, movie, documentary, or museum that presents idols and false gods in a positive or neutral light or presents the idols or false gods immodestly or pornographically even if they are presented in a negative light. A Catholic can only read or view these things without a dispensation after they have been censored with a condemnation of the idols and false gods in a prominent place within the book, movie, documentary, or museum and all immodesty and pornography has been covered or removed.

For example, it is good to show images of devils and damned humans as grotesque, as long as they are portrayed in a negative light, such as residing in hell, and as long as they are not immodest or pornographic. It is also good to show an image of Satan with Saint Michael stepping on Satan's head because Satan is portrayed in a negative light. But a sole image of Satan, Jupiter, Venus, or Aristotle does not present the Devil, false god, false goddess, or pagan philosopher in a negative light and thus glorifies and favors it and

hence is idolatrous, formally heretical, blasphemous, and scandalous. And if it is in a so-called Catholic place, it is also sacrilegious and desecrates the place. (See RJMI book *The Desecration of Catholic Places*: Images that glorify evil things desecrate a place.)

An idol or a false god that is so immodest or pornographic that most or all of it must be covered could be accompanied by a description or simply described with modest words. For example, an image of Pluto raping Persephone must be almost completely covered to be shown and should have a description that Pluto is raping Persephone. In some cases a description alone may suffice.

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