**Ancient Mythology and Canon Law**

**The debate on clandestinity and parental consent at the Council of Trent (1545-1563)**

The revival of the Classics influenced Renaissance culture and society in a variety of areas; poetry, art, history, politics, etc. This paper focuses on the legal area, and, more specifically, the use of themes and ideas from ancient mythology in the debate on marriage in Sixteenth Century Canon Law.

According to contemporary sources, marriage was in a crisis in Renaissance Europe. Humanists, Reformers, and reform-minded Catholics decried the lack of order and stability in contemporary marriage and family-life. They particularly castigated the marriage legislation in Canon Law, where the consent of the future spouses was sufficient to create a valid marriage. The critics notably demanded greater publicity and, above all, mandatory parental consent for a valid marriage. These issues were discussed at length at the council of Trent in a session on the reform of marriage.

This paper analyses how examples, ideas, and metaphors from ancient mythology were used in the debate on clandestinity and parental consent at the council of Trent. As could be expected most arguments were taken from Scripture or other religious writings, but references to ancient mythology were also surprisingly frequent. The paper examines what examples were used, what arguments they were called to support, and, finally, why and how ancient mythology was used in such an unlikely setting as a Catholic Church council.