

**Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 426 AD.**

Citing Varro as “a most learned man among the [pagans], and [a man] of the weightiest authority” on paganism (*Civ.* 4.1 [NPNF1 2:64]), Augustine summarizes Varro’s account of the naming of Athens (*Civ.* 18.9 [NPNF1 2:365]):

Athens certainly derived its name from Minerva, who in Greek is called Ἀθηνῆ [Athena], and Varro points out the following reason why it was so called. When an olive-tree suddenly appeared there, and water burst forth in another place, these prodigies moved the king to send to the Delphic Apollo to inquire what they meant and what he should do. He answered that the olive signified Minerva, the water Neptune, and that the citizens had it in their power to name their city as they chose, after either of these two gods whose signs these were. On receiving this oracle, Cecrops convoked all the citizens of either sex to give their vote, for it was then the custom in those parts for the women also to take part in public deliberations. When the multitude was consulted, the men gave their votes for Neptune, the women for Minerva; and as the women had a majority of one, Minerva conquered. Then Neptune, being enraged, laid waste the lands of the Athenians, by casting up the waves of the sea; for the demons have no difficulty in scattering any waters more widely. The same authority said, that to appease his wrath the women should be visited by the Athenians with the three-fold punishment—that they should no longer have any vote; that none of their children should be named after their mothers; and that no one should call them Athenians. Thus that city, the mother and nurse of liberal doctrines, and of so many and so great philosophers, than whom Greece had nothing more famous and noble, by the mockery of demons about the strife of their gods, a male and female, and from the victory of the female one through the women, received the name of Athens; and, on being damaged by the vanquished god, was compelled to punish the very victory of the victress, fearing the waters of Neptune more than the arms of Minerva. For in the women who were thus punished, Minerva, who had conquered, was conquered too, and could not even help her voters so far that, although the right of voting was henceforth lost, and the mothers could not give their names to the children, they might at least be allowed to be called Athenians, and to merit the name of that goddess whom they had made victorious over a male god by giving her their votes.

[...] What and how much could be said about this, if we had not to hasten to other things in our discourse, is obvious.”