First Book

Augustine explains that Christians and pagans alike suffer while Rome falls. The loss of worldly goods is not always disastrous. Romans believed suicide to be an acceptable response to misfortune, but it is not.
Lately, civilization has been falling apart...

"Maidens and boys are carried off, children are torn from parents' embrace, temples and homes are despoiled. There is fire and slaughter everywhere; fighting men are everywhere, with corpses, with lamentations and blood." *

And a lot of people have been making connections between Rome's collapse and Christianity.

We weren't pathetic pansies back in the old days. We weren't men who just kicked ass for the weak! Earl, a man not a stinking little Greek slut.

As if anyone ever was merciful to an enemy because they were pious!

Hold your fire, Quintus Antoninus! These fellows are praying to their gods, just as we do! Perhaps we are not so different after all.

The barbarians were actually being quite civil in sparing Christian churches...

We're not animals, you know.

Sometimes I wish I was a little mouse. Shhh.

* This from the Roman historian Sallust, who is describing the Roman civil war.
...which calls a serious question to mind—why does God allow both the good and the wicked to suffer alike?

I don't understand—I paid my taxes, obeyed the law, listened to the priests—and you were a common thief! Poor you. Silence, you dogs!

They certainly don't react the same way even if they feel pain the same...

Unto thee, O God, I commend my soul. I am so screwed—get me the #@$ out of this...

Stir a cesspit and it stinks to high heaven, but still perfume and the delight a bouquet fills the room!

It's perfectly natural to fear danger because it threatens life. Everybody loves life—even churchmen.

They really should remember that Jesus didn't really encourage clinging to things of this life. Don't store up your treasures on earth—but in heaven, for where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

After all, death comes to us all. I am certain of this, that none has died who was not going to die, and life's ending reduces the longest life to the same thing as the shortest.

Too true, too true.

But whatever horror befalls the body, nothing on earth can harm the soul.

Well, that was unpleasant.
Suicide has long been thought an honorable option...

Avenge me, honey.

Lucrètia famously killed herself after being raped by her husband's enemy.

By Roman reasoning, suicide cancels out any possibility of guilt.

There were two involved but only one committed adultery!!

Her husband's revenge led directly to the founding of the Roman Republic.

This seems confusing—would God have us live a dishonorable life, or kill ourselves to avoid horrors?

Can't you think up another option?

We all remember the early Christians who chose to die in the circus rather than blaspheme.

Here's what's wrong with that kind of reasoning: we are commanded not to lie...

I cannot lie and say that Caesar is God!

That's ok! We all know it's just bullsh*t.

But I'd be lying to myself!

So if it's wrong to lie to yourself, then since we're commanded not to kill...

...so if it's wrong to lie to yourself, how's it legit to kill yourself?

Well... the apostles got to do it...

...do they pity you to think?
Admittedly, some killing is allowed—when God commands it, like in the Old Testament...

Abraham  Jephtha  Samson

With the exception of killings prescribed by just law, or commands of God, though, killing is murder.

**And let's be clear—the Old Testament is over, and God doesn't talk to people like he used to.**

Codex Theodosii, published 438 AD after Attila died, but close enough.

Another famous case is Cato, who killed himself rather than live under Caesar, but it's more likely he did it to spite Caesar.

Oooh I just hate that guy so much!! I'll show him!!

That's how Caesar saw it, anyways.

Guess he settled my hash!

And regarding chastity, take care not to allow pride in your purity to make it a cause for sin.

Post-Why's Porcia Superilia such a snob? She's still a virgin, big accomplishment.

And by 'just law,' Aug means a law code based in Scripture.

Where's your God now, Christian? When I am troubled by adversity, he is testing me or punishing my faults. Where's yours?

Bible law!!
Those who blame Christianity for Rome’s decline should reflect upon Scipio’s fears. He warned that the destruction of Carthage meant trouble.

I told you! Dispose of a credible rival and Rome will end up consuming itself!

Civil War! Murderous Crackers! Dissolution of Morals!

AND STILL TODAY, AS CIVILIZATION CRUMBLES AROUND THEM, MANY WASTE THEIR TIME WITH THE CIRCUS GAMES RATHER THAN FACE REALITY!

The Visigoths have sacked Rome.

MY GOD! HOW CAN THIS BE?!!

The Ostrogoths have butchered Libyans.

Oh, shame too.

AND THE GAMES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED.

Scipio defeated Carthage 400 years before Augustine wrote.

Scipio wanted Rome to have an enemy to keep it from wallowing in luxury—but you have learned nothing from calamity! Wretched, worthless Rome!!

Sometimes, Augustine really lets go... BJR c.33

Among us live barbarians who may one day become true Romans. Likewise, no one can tell who among us is a true member of the city of God.

Who is Denis Gould? How do I ask him to teach me a feasible law code?

Christ have mercy on you... you thinking subhuman are born in hell, you filthy bume!

In truth, the two cities, that of man and that of God, are interwoven and intermixed in this era and await separation at the last judgment. God willing, I will explain these cities’ origins, development, and appointed end.
At the end of Book One, Augustus provides a general overview of the "whole argument" of the City of God. His overview covers the first half of the book. This one will cover the whole thing—all 22 books.

In the first part, I examine how religion in the City of Man is all about earthly happiness. In what amounts to an autobiography of the Roman civilization, Augustus makes liberal use of Roman historians...


The sixth book features the Roman philosopher Varro's analysis of gods. In Book Seven, we explore Varro's ideas about divinity. Book Eight, we explore the possibilities that reason alone can teach God. In Book Nine, we move into mystical teaching and demons. In Book Ten, Augustus compares Platonic philosophy to Christianity.

And I tell you the truth about the gods of Rome...
IN THE THIRD PART, WE TURN TO THE CITY OF GOD, THE TRUE HOME OF ALL WHO LOVE GOD. IT'S HISTORY BEGINS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE, OUR RECORD OF GOD'S MOVEMENT IN CREATION.

IN BOOK ELEVEN WE BEGIN WITH ANGELS, GOOD AND EVIL.

IN BOOK TWELVE, WE CONTINUE WITH CREATION.

NEXT, BOOK THIRTEEN COVERS OUR CREATION AND FIRST SIN.

BOOK FOURTEEN INTRODUCES THE MAIN IDEA—BECAUSE OF SIN, THERE ARE TWO CITIES: OF MAN, AND OF GOD.

PART FIVE DESCRIBES THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF GOD TO THE TIME OF CHRIST.

THEN, IN BOOK FIFTEEN WE EXPLORE THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD.

BOOK SIXTEEN GOES FROM THE FLOOD TO DAVID.

WHO WANTS COMMANDMENTS?

THE PROPHETS ARE THE TOPIC OF BOOK SEVENTEEN.

Hey! Why don't you listen to me?


Are you among the elect? Don't know you judging. I hope so.

Yeah, me too.

FINALLY, THE FIFTH PART TIES EVERYTHING TOGETHER, AND PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD TO COME—SPECIFICALLY THE IDEALS THAT WOULD DEFINE CHRISTIAN EUROPE.

BOOK NINETEEN CONTAINS THE PRESCRIPTION FOR A JUST, CHRISTIAN STATE.

NEXT, IN BOOK TWENTY, WE CONSIDER JUSTICE AND THE LAST JUDGMENT.

BOOK TWENTY-ONE IS ABOUT HELL AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

AND BOOK TWENTY-TWO WRAPS THE WHOLE THING UP!

AND LET'S BE CLEAR— "INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY" IS NOT PART OF THE EQUATION, EVEN IF RIGHTS ARE.

LAST CALL!

HOW WILL TOUGHIE WICKER IF YOU DON'T HAVE A BODY?

... CARE TO FIND OUT?

HEAVEN SEEMS LIKE A GOOD STOPPING POINT. ANYWAYS, IM BUSHED!
SECOND BOOK

THE MORAL OBSCENITIES ENCOURAGED BY THE PAGAN GODS STAGED IN PUBLIC CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALL OF SOCIAL ORDER, AND EVENTUALLY, OF ALL ROMAN CULTURE.
Okay, before we go any deeper into this, let's be clear about something. I'm not going to bother addressing every objection that might pop up.

Already I've spent time enough with the issue of suffering of just people and suicide... Those poor women should have killed themselves rather than submit to that horror!!

If I kept on like this, we'll just get anywhere.

I hope I've made it clear that the barbarians have done far less damage to Rome than the Romans have.

There, there, old fellow. Don't feel too bad. We've had hundreds of years to rot from within...

We must tried so hard!

Let's face it - if the Roman gods were so great, why did they let so many disasters befall Rome when it was pagan?

Esuvio: Dons, ik...

Try praying to another god, Publius! It's just getting worse!

Aren't gods supposed to instruct men in morality? Where are the moral codes of the pagan gods?

Moral code? Who needs a moral code when you're fabulous?

And the way some of these gods are worshipped? Honestly, I'm embarrassed to describe it...

Shake it, people! Make Venus smell your love!

Eww!!
FIRSTANCE, LOOK AT HOW THEY WORSHIP CYBELE, THE MOTHER OF THE GODS. WOULD YOU WANT YOUR MOTHER TO HEAR THAT?

EVERYBODY! 🎵
O SACRED MOTHER HOLY VAGINA, O BLESSED VULVA, THANKS BE TO THEE!

HAVE YOU EVER FOUND ANY TEMPLES TO THE GODS WHERE MORAL VIRTUES WERE TAUGHT?

DEPENDS - IS SEX WITH A STRANGER A MORAL VIRTUE?

"OH, BUT THE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS TAUGHT VIRTUE WELL ENOUGH!" THEY SAY. SO WHY WERE THEY TREATED BADLY, THEN?

... AND SO, CONSIDERED THE PUBLICLY DOING PHILOSOPHY, I RECOMMEND THE COURT GRANT ME FREE FOOD FOR LIFE.

DEATH TO YOU!!

THIS REALLY HAPPENED TO SOCRATES, FATHER OF PHILOSOPHY.

EVEN GREAT MINDS LIKE TERENCE ADMITTED THAT THE LICENSOUSNESS OF THE GODS WAS AN IRRESISTIBLE EXAMPLE.

THIS FRESCO OF ZEUS DESCRIBING ON DIONE IN A GOLDEN SHOWER REALLY STRUCK A CHORD WITH ME.

TERENCE IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST ROMAN DRAMATISTS.

THIS SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE, AFTER ALL, THESE 'GODS' OF THE PAGANS ARE, IN FACT, DEMONS.

I CAN'T BREATHE IN THIS PRIMAL AIR. HERE, LET ME HELP YOU - YOU'VE GOT IT ALL TURNED AROUND.

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE GODS POSITIVELY GLORIED IN THE SCURVILIGIOUS PLANS ABOUT THEM.

HA! THEY GOT YOU, BOY!

IS THAT HOW I WALK?
EQUALLY UNSURPRISING IS THE FACT THAT THE GREEKS OFTEN SAVED THE ACTORS WHO PORTRAYED THESE GODS HIGH POLITICAL OFFICE.

YES, IT'S MORNING IN ATHENS. FELLOW CITIZENS...

THE ROMANS, WHILE STILL ENJOYING THESE SHAMEFUL PLAYS ABOUT THE GODS, AT LEAST KNEW ENOUGH TO KEEP ACTORS OUT OF OFFICE.

O THAT MY LOVE WERE LIKE A FLOWER, ...

THEY DID, THAT IS, UNTIL NERO.

WE CHRISTIANS DO THE SENSIBLE THING AND BAN THEATER ALTOGETHER...

CONFOUND IT. THIS IS NOT A PERFORMANCE!!

JUST A MOMENT, YOUR GRACE. LET ME STRAIGHTEN YOUR CHASUBLE...

STUPID POETS.

PLATO WANTED TO HAVE ALL POETS AND DRAMATISTS KICKED OUT OF HIS REPUBLIC, FOR A PAGAN HE WAS PRETTY SMART!

REPUBLIC

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

PHILOSOPHY®

BUT BACK TO THESE "GODS"—ISN'T IT OBVIOUS THAT THEY'VE JUST BEEN MANIPULATED TO GLORIFY THE COUNTRY WHERE THEY'RE WORSHIPED?

OH, YOU DON'T WORSHIP ROMULUS IN ATHENS? NO, WE LIKE ATHENA.

THESE USELESS GODS GAVE THE ROMANS NOTHING. THAT'S WHAT LED ROME TO TAKE THEIR LAWS AND CULTURE FROM GREECE.

NICE LAW CODE. WE'LL TAKE IT.

DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY IT WORKS?

...NO.
The Romans showed off their "virtue" by stealing the women of the Sabines when they conquered that tribe.

Sallust tells of how the only thing that prevented a rebellion against the patricians during the Republic was the invading Carthaginians!

"Be my Valentine." "Creep."

"Stinkin' patrician."

"Uh... gods..."

"Athy Pleb."

After the destruction of Carthage, though, Sallust says that things went right back into the toilet.

"Tell me, Calpurnia... what was that word we used that kept us looking but for one another?"

"Honor."

"Yes. That was it."

There's just no such thing as a virtuous pagan republic!

If all men were to live together in Christian virtue and righteousness, then things would work!

Hear, hear!

Well said!

Even Cicero, years before Christ, recognized that Rome's past majesty had decayed and rotted away.

We keep the name "Republic," but we lost the reality long ago and it was our own fault.

Where were Rome's supposed gods back when the Gauls almost conquered it? All that saved Rome was the quacking of some geese!

Sacre bleu! Stupid goose!

So we're back with the gods again? Where are just mummin' up?!
IF YOU WANT AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE GODS ARE BASICALLY NONSENSE, LOOK AT THE GREAT DICTATOR SULLA. THEY SUPPOSEDLY LIKED HIM.

THEM ENTRAILS ARE VERY PROMISING, GENERAL!!

THEY EVEN ENRAGED HIM TO INDULGE IN BLOODY REVENGE ON HIS ENEMIES - THROUGH HORRIBLE CIVIL WAR!

SORRY, PUBLIUS MARCUS. IT SEEMS THAT THE GODS ARE COOL WITH YOUR LIQUIDATION!

DID THEY REPROVE HIM FOR HIS BLOODTHIRSTY TACTICS AS HE DISMANTLED THE REPUBLIC?

UH...GENERAL SULLA - HAVE THE GODS SUGGESTED AN END TO THE EXECUTIONS...?

NOT A PEEP.

WONDERFUL NEWS, GENERAL!! VICTORY WILL BE YOURS!

THE GODS DECREE IT!

THERE'S A FAMOUS EPISODE WHERE THE GODS "FORETOLD" HIS VICTORY AT TARENTUM...

...BUT THEY NEVER WARNED HIM OF THE DANGER HIS RECKLESSNESSES POSED TO HIS LATER MORAL DEGRADATION!

SOMETHING FEELS... I DON'T KNOW... HOLLOW. WHAT SAY THE GODS?

NOTHING SO FAR, MY GENERAL.

THESE DEMONIC GODS MADE SULLA THEIR PLAYTHING! THEY DESTROYED HIM!!

FOR A MORE BALANCED VIEW OF SULLA, WHO WAS A COMPLEX FIGURE, READ PLUTARCH'S LIFE OF SULLA. UNLIKE OTHER DICTATORS, SULLA VOLUNTARILY RESIGNED THE DICTATORSHIP OF ROME.

CAN ONE BE A GREAT MAN AND A GOOD MAN?
Some say that the ancient religion had secret teachings of real morality for the initiates...

Act always so that the principle behind it would be universal law.

Mmm...yes

Evil things fascinate, while good things are ignored. It is as if purity is embarrassing and corruption is praiseworthy.

There goes Marius Gallus, a most honorable man...the molesting boys, you know...Mmm...hmm.

REALLY? DO TELL!

The demons they called 'gods' used this ugly fact to capture the honorable minority while controlling everyone else.

They really are predictable little apes.

Funny in their way...

Why, I recall watching a ceremony for the heavenly virgins. Somehow piety and prayer were mixed with...well...

Some evil spirit compels man to such wicked displays of indecency and immorality.

People learned about the depraved things that pleased the 'gods,' and reasoned that they should imitate them.

Dammit, Clystra! It says here that we've been doing it wrong! I hope the gods don't get assed...

...didn't feel wrong...
MANY HAVE BEEN RESCUED FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THIS FIENDISH CULT BY CHRISTIANITY, INFURIATING THOSE WHO REMAIN.

OHH, SO NOW YOU'RE TOO GOOD TO PROPITIATE THE GODDESS WITH RITUAL SEX??

I SUPPOSE NOW YOU PRAY TO JEEZUS BEFORE YOU HAVE SEX!

THEIR DEPRAVITY MAKES ME SICK!

WAKE UP ROMANS! ONCE YOU WERE GREAT, BUT YOUR FOUL RELIGION HAS ENSNARED YOU!

THESE "GODS" ARE DEMONS WHO USE YOU AND LEAVE YOU TO DIE!!

THESE DEMONS DESPISE HUMANKIND! WHY ELSE WOULD THEY PRETEND TO BE PLEASED BY OUR ACTING DISHONESTLY? CHRISTIANITY MUST FORGE SOME OF THIS RELIGION!

BESIDES, THE POWER THESE DEMONS CLAIM TO HAVE OVER PHYSICAL THINGS LIKE BODIES IS AN ILLUSION.

DO YOU REALLY DOUBT MY POWER?

NO. I JUST RECOGNIZE THAT IT IS NOT TRULY YOURS.

BUT MORE ON THAT LATER. THIS BOOK IS FINISHED...
Third Book

The History of Rome shows the meaninglessness of the "favor" of the gods, with some attention to its wars.
I CAME ON ABOUT MORAL EVIL, BUT EVIL PEOPLE USUALLY PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT SORT OF TALK.

WHAT’S HE GOING ON ABOUT? HOW TO BE GOOD.
NO WONDER NOBODY’S LISTENING.

THEY TEND TO EQUATE MORAL GOODNESS WITH HAVING NICE STUFF.

THE MEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH? PERHAPS... WHEN I’M DONE WITH IT.

THEY ARE MORE DISGUSTED BY A BAD HOUSE THAN BY A BAD LIFE.

BUT TO RETURN TO THE SILLINESS OF BELIEVING IN THE GREATNESS OF THE GODS: LOOK AT THE ILLOGICAL STORY OF LAOMEDON.

HELP THIS FELLOW TO BUILD WALLS.

BOY, THAT’LL SPEED THINGS UP!

ZEUS COMMANDED APOLLO AND NEPTUNE TO HELP HIM BUILD THE WALLS OF TROY.

AFTER THE WALLS WERE BUILT, LAOMEDON REFUSED TO PAY THEM, HOW COULD THEY NOT HAVE SEEN THAT COMING?

THANKS, BUT I’M NOT PAYIN’!

THE STORY IS THAT THEY PUNISHED TROY FOR THE ADULTERY OF PARIS—BUT WERE COOL WITH VENUS CHEATING ON VULCAN.

CUTE LITTLE FELLOW, THIS AENEAS. WHO’S YOUR DADDY?
ANCHISES, WHO?

IT IS ALL NONSENSE, OF COURSE. VARRO EXPLAINS WHY BRAVE MEN CLAIM TO BE SONS OF GODS OR GODDESSES...

THese STORIES ARE USEFUL TO ENCOURAGE GREATNESS IN SOCIETY.

(TOTALLY NOT RELEVANT TO CHRISTIANITY.

AUGS GETS BACK TO THIS LATER. RIGHT NOW THE FOCUS IS ON ROME’S MYTHIC HISTORY, BEGINNING WITH VIRGIL’S AENEID.
MORE EVIDENCE THAT THE GODS REALLY CARED NOTHING FOR HUMAN BEINGS...

PARIS Commits ABLERTY
ROMULUS KILLS REINS

ROMULUS Kills REINS
HIS BROTHER.

...TROY IS DESTROYED...

ROME flourishes.

I HEARD THAT OUR
SIEGE OF ILIUM IS IRRONIC.
DO YOU KNOW WHY?

WHATS "IRRONIC"?

PEOPLE SAY THAT THE GODS FAVORED NUMA’S REIGN WITH PEACE, YET THE RELIGION OF THESE GODS ONLY DEVELOPED AFTERWARDS!

HMM... ALL THIS PEACE PUTS ME IN THE MIND OF STARTING A RELIGION...

NIMA WAS A LEGENDARY EARLY KING OF ROME.

OVER THE YEARS, ROME COLLECTED MORE AND MORE GODS. IT WAS AS IF IT NEEDED MORE AS ITS BORDERS EXPANDED—JUST LIKE A LARGER SHIP NEEDS A LARGER CREW!

AESCVLAPIVS

CYBELE

CYNOCEPHALUS

FEbris

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TROY AND ROME?

VIRGIL WROTE THE AENEID, THE NATIONAL EPIC ABOUT THE FOUNDING OF ROME, AS A SEQUEL TO HOMER’S ILIAD. IN IT, AEneas LEADS A BRAVE BAND OF TROJANS TO ITALY, WHERE THEY ESTABLISH ROMAN CIVILIZATION.

AND THE FINAL INJUSTICE WAS THAT ILIUM, THE CITY BUILT ON TROY’S ASHES, WAS DESTROYED BY ROME IN 85 B.C.!
I've already mentioned how Roman men stole Sabine women for wives—what terrible violence was to follow!

Yer s'posta ask th' DADDY'S PERMISSION! DON'T HASSLE US WITH YER RULES, MAN!

After Numa Rome became a bloodthirsty beast, slaughtering other peoples as a matter of course, fighting only to fight.

DIE.. um... WHAT KIND OF SCUM ARE THESE GUYS? ALBAN!

As to the illustrious kings of ancient Rome, let us meditate on how each met his end. For surely, if the gods were just, their deaths would appropriately complete their reigns...

Romulus was disappeared morning he was secretly murdered.

Tullius Hostius was hit by lightning.

Servius Tullius was murdered by his son in law, Tarquinius...

...who eventually was overthrown and died in poverty.

Junius Brutus, who overthrew Tarquinius and founded the Roman Republic, discovered that two of his sons were involved in a plot against him...

After a time, the Republic came to be dominated by great divisions between rich and poor.

LOVELY SUNSET.. DO YOU SUPPOSE THE POOR ENJOY SUNSETS MARVY?

*Ancestor of the Brutus who helped kill Julius Caesar.
Sallust says, "Any man was classed as a good citizen in proportion as his resources increased his power to champion the status quo."

"Fellow senators, we all agree that Rome depends upon our unmov ing stability..."

"And where were the Roman gods when Rome met with calamity?"

"...with plague?"

"...with famine?"

"Where were they when the Gauls sacked and burned Rome?"

"Or when the Romans fought pointlessly in Veii for ten years?"

"Or when a disease killed only pregnant women?"

"They were silent when Regulus was captured by Carthage and through his unbending pride, executed in a spiked cage."

"And they were silent when Metullus almost immolated himself rescuing the sacred Palladum statue from the fire at Vesta."

"A wooden statue of Athena brought from Troy."
HOW CAN ANYONE BELIEVE THAT ROMAN GODS AIDED ROME DURING THE TERRIBLE WAR WITH
HANNIBAL? HIS CARTHAGINIAN ARMIES RAN ROUGHSHOD OVER ALL ITALY! AT ONCE,
IT IS SAID THAT MORE THAN 40,000 ROMANS DIED IN ONE DAY! [AUG 2, 216 BC]

CARTHAGE LAID SIEGE TO ROME'S ALLIES, THE SAGUNTINES, AND THINGS BECAME SO
TERIBLE, STARVATION AND CANIBALISM RESULTED.

HOW CAN THEY WAITED
SO LONG TO GIVE US THIS JELLY?

SO CRUEL WAS THE SIEGE THAT STARVING
PEOPLE THREW THEMSELVES ONTO THE
BURNING HEAPS OF THE DEAD.

AND THE ROMAN WHO FINALLY DEFEATED
CARTHAGE, SCIPIO, WHAT OF HIM? HE WAS
FORCED INTO EXILE.

WHO CAN FORGET THE DAY THAT MITHRIDATES
OF PONTUS ORDERED THE MASSACRE OF ALL
ROMANS IN ASIA?

THIS WHEN ROME'S VIRTUES WERE AT THEIR PEAK!

THIS IS THE SAME MITHRIDATES WHO
DEVELOPED IMMUNITY TO POISON BY
REGULARLY POISONING HIMSELF.

THAT'S RIGHT. MY HAT IS A LION.
IF THE GODS WERE SO HAPPY WITH PAGAN ROME, WHY DID EVERY DOMESTICATED ANIMAL IN ROME GO MAD IN 90 BC?

WHY SO QUIET, GANG?

AND THEN CAME THE WAR THAT AROSE WHEN THE GRACCHUS BROTHERS HAD A CRAZY IDEA...

YOU KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO, GAIUS? BREAK UP THE LAND-HELDING MONOPOLY OF THE WEALTHY.

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS SUCCESSED AT FIRST, BUT SOON WAS CLUBBED TO DEATH BY SENATORS.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY WIDESPREAD RIOTING THROUGHOUT ROME AS THE RIVAL Factions Vied FOR CONTROL.

THE MAYHEM STOPPED WHEN SOMEONE KILLED GAIUS GRACCHUS AND SOLD THE HEAD FOR ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD.

YOU DIDN'T PUT ANYTHING IN HIS MOUTH TO MAKE IT HEAVIER?

AFTER THE GRACCHI WAR, THEY BUILT A NEW TEMPLE OF CONCORD TO AFFIRM ROME'S DEDICATION TO INTERNAL PEACE.

NOT THAT IT HELPED MUCH—WITHIN A VERY SHORT TIME, ROME WAS AT WAR AGAIN. THIS TIME, THE ENEMY WAS ROME'S ITALIAN ALLIES!

WHO WE FIGHTING NOW?

THE ITALIANS.

I THOUGHT WE WERE THE ITALIANS!

JUST SHOOT.
Next came the terrible Servile Wars, when slaves arose against their masters. Who can bear to remember the horrors they led to?

Soon, a horrific civil war began. Sulla had been appointed general in the war against Mithridates...

Gaius Marius had wanted the job, and got his friends to appoint him general, too.

Sulla returned, Marius fled. Sulla left Marius returned and got busy.

The violence that followed was epic. Marius had:

A consul's head cut off and put on a pole in the Forum...

Some publicly disemboweled...

...others killed in secret.

Sulla returned, and it continued:

Widescale butchery and pillage...

...perceived enemies returned to death.
ALL THIS TOOK PLACE IN PEACE TIME. PEACE AND WAR HAD A COMPETITION IN CRUELTY; PEACE WON. WAR KILLED SOLDIERS, BUT PEACE KILLED INNOCENTS.

WERE THE GAULS, OR MORE RECENTLY, THE GOTH'S, MORE CRUEL THAN ROMANS WERE TO ONE ANOTHER? THINK OF MARCIUS BURNT ASWICKLY CLIMBING TO AN ALTAR!

BUT AFTER SULLA AND MARCIUS, ROME'S INTERNAL WARS ONLY INCREASED...

SERTORIUS LED A REVOLT IN 79, CATALINE FORMED A CONSPIRACY IN 64, POMPEY FIGURED IN THE TERRIBLE CIVIL WAR... AS DID HIS ENEMY JULIUS CAESAR...

FINALLY OCTAVIAN ENDED THE REPUBLIC AND TOOK THE NAME AUGUSTUS.

IF ROME HAD BECOME CHRISTIAN IN THOSE CENTURIES, WOULD THE CRITICS BLAME ALL OF THOSE HORRORS ON CHRISTIANITY? OF COURSE! NOT TO MENTION...

...THE CALAMITOUS VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS AT ETNA AND CRATANE,

THE POTENTOUS SWARM OF LOCUSTS IN AFRICA,

TALKING OXEN,

WOMEN TURNING INTO MEN,

FLYING SNAKES...

I COULD GO ON!
IN THE FIRST BOOK, I BEGAN BY REFUTING THOSE PEOPLE WHO BLAME ROME'S DECAY ON CHRISTIANITY. THE PAGAN GODS, YOU SEE, ARE REALLY FOOLISH DEITIES.

AND IN THE NEXT TWO BOOKS, I CHRONICLED THE MORAL AND NATURAL EVils THAT BEFALL ROME IN PAGAN TIMES — AND I HAVE ONLY BegUN!

SO THE QUESTION ARISES — IS IT BETTER FOR AN EMPIRE TO GROW EVER LARGER? CONSIDER TWO MEN — ONE OF MIDDING MEANS AND ONE RICH.

I AM THE RICH MAN.

DO YOU WANT TO BE THE RICH GUY? NO, YOU DON'T. ALL HE DOES IS WORRY ABOUT KEEPING HIS STUFF, NEVER KNOWING PEACE.

YOU EVER WONDER WHAT HAPPINESS IS, SINEE?

GOOD. DON'T WASTE OF TIME.

THE OTHER GUY IS SECURE WITH HIS MIDDING RESOURCES, CONTENT WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND HIS LOT IN LIFE.

YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR LIFE?

IS THERE A BEER IN FRONT OF ME?

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME — I'M NOT SAYING THAT A LARGE EMPIRE IS WRONG — ONLY THAT IT SHOULD BE RULED BY THE RIGHTOUS, FREE FROM VICE.
This is true because the only free man is one who is not a slave to his vices.

The story of Alexander and the pirate comes to mind.

I say, how dare you infest the sea?

Same's you, but because I do it in a boat, I'm a pirate. You have an army and a navy, so they call you emperor.

Greek historians tell us that the Assyrian king Ninus was the first to create an empire. Even though Greeks are notoriously inaccurate, this is probably true.

This kingdom's just not big enough for my greatness.

Yet when the gladiators revolted under Sparta, and looked at him as an army from Rome called this "criminal!"

Hic pendet spartans.

Yeah, ironic, isn't it.

The Assyrian empire lasted 1,240 years — without the help of Rome's gods, did they have their own gods?
VARRO SAID THAT, WHEN ROMANS SAID "GOD," THEY MEANT JUPITER. HE THOUGHT THAT THE STATUE THEY MADE FOR THE CAPITOL WAS UGLY.

IT'S JUST TACKY.

LET'S FACE IT. ASSIGNING SOME GOD TO SOME SPECIFIC PART OF REALITY IS PRETTY ARBITRARY.

Perhaps we are to understand that each of the many, many gods is an aspect of Jupiter?
IS EMPIRE A GOD? PERHAPS IT IS THE GODDESS VICTORY... SHE SHOULD BE GREATER THAN JUPITER!

STEP ASIDE, OLD MAN.

OF COURSE VICTORY WOULD HAVE TRIUMPH FOR A HUSBAND...

PLATO SAYS THE GODS ARE ALL GOOD, YET FOROINE IS SOMETIMES GOOD, AND SOMETIMES BAD. IS SHE ONLY DIVINE SOMETIMES?

WHEN I'M GOOD, I'M VERY GOOD...

...BUT WHEN I'M BAD, HONEY, I'M BETTER.

TY OF GOD BL 4 cc 12-18
Virtue and faith are both goddesses with statues and temples. How ridiculous! How can you have one without the other?

I don't see why that's so odd.

Well, it is, trust me.

Ooooh, I love trust!

And if felicity, too, is a goddess, why have any other gods at all? Isn't felicity, happiness, all we can hope for?

Of course, the question arises—if I'm the goddess of happiness, do I require people to worship me? If so, then I must rely on them to make me happy... if not, how do they get happy?

I know this stuff because Varro took the time to draw up a complete directory of all the gods and goddesses.

But back to felicity—is it not strange that her temple was insignificant next to Jupiter's majestic temple?

I just can't get past this—why would anyone pray to any other god for happiness, if felicity is divine??

Hey—shoot a little joy to my worshippers, will ya? Why don't they worship me?

Ooh... stayin' happy?

Come on! Pagans aren't idiots! They knew that happiness is a gift, not a god! They just didn't know which god to thank.

We give thanks to... um... Felicitas!
**Scaevola, said that many of the gods were just famous men from the past.**

My granddad wasn't just a great warrior — he was the **God of War**!

...This is called Euhemerism, an idea from 300 BCE.

---

**The Great Gaius Mucius Scaevola hypothesized three avenues by which tales of gods developed...**

All of it comes from statesmen, philosophers, and poets. ...buncha bullshit artists.

---

**But Scaevola, I don't get it — you insist that Jupiter be worshipped as King of Gods!!**

---

**So? So?!? If these demonic gods could actually have done anything, they would have done it for the Greeks, not Rome!!**

We were much better at worshiping them than you Romans!
The Romans loved to claim that augury promised Rome its coming glory...

Cicero was an augur, and admitted it was nonsense.

This is just so ridiculous! Ha ha.

He tells us of Quintus Lucilius Balbus, the Stoic philosopher, who had definite opinions!

These stories are told by fools and believed by fools. A mass of frivolous nonsense!

Cicero, despite your attempt to unravel the good of the Pagan religion, from the bad, you must admit the whole thing is a charade!

Don't be rude.

Varro wrote extensively about the Roman gods, and thought that most of it was nonsense, too.

Was it God's will that his sceptical approach reveals the truth about Paganism?

The truth is that God is in absolute control of all history, you see. The record of this begins in the Old Testament.

The history of Israel is as filled with glory as any other—and they had no place for other gods.

And it ends when the Jews abandoned God.
THE FIFTH BOOK SHOWS THE
FALSITY OF ASTROLOGY, DIVINATION,
AND HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS
RELIANT UPON FATE OR DESTINY.
So what was the cause of Rome's greatness? Not destiny, not fortune... God!

Yes, God looks just like he does on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Whaddaya know!

Some people are convinced that the stars moving through the heavens cause things here on Earth.

Mars is ascending in Capricorn, but Mercury is opposed to Aquarius... looks like trouble!

They are idiots.

Why? Think about twins - they are born at almost exactly the same time, but their lives are by no means identical...

No! You're confusing some very complex issues!

We cannot see it, but the scale is so vast, but the stars in the constellations always move... so twins' lives differ...

Okay, so differences that nobody can see in constellations account for how twins' lives differ...

Yes! Differences so subtle, so infinitesimally tiny, that we cannot see them!

Then how can you foretell anything??

We just can!

If ever there was a dramatic example of twins with vastly different lives, it's in Genesis 25...

Just how hungry are you, Esau?
What about when two men get sick at the same moment, and suffer in the same way, and die simultaneously - does this mean they were born under the same sign?

And what about two friends of mine who are twins - he is a noted cavalry officer, travelling the world, and she stays at home, a consecrated virgin?

We have nothing in common.

And what if a man and a mouse are born at exactly the same instant, in exactly the same place...?

Am I to believe that I just missed that fly because it was fated??

Others use the word fate or destiny to describe the force guiding everything. They even call destiny 'Jupiter'.

Fate leads the willing... and drags the unwilling.

Seneca, quoting the Stoic Cleanthes.
CICERO REALY DIDN'T LIKE THE STOIC BELIEF IN FATE OR DESTINY, AND WOULDN'T PUT UP WITH TALK OF GOD KNOWING THE FUTURE, EITHER. CALL IT FATE, DESTINY, OR GOD, MAKES NO DIFFERENCE—IT ELIMINATES FREEDOM!

PREACH, JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR NOTHING LEFT TO LOSSE.

WE CHRISTIANS, THOUGH, DO NOT MIND THAT WHAT WE DO BY OUR WILLING ISN'T VOLUNTARY BECAUSE GOD KNEW AHEAD OF TIME...

...AND I ETERNALLY REKNEW YOU WOULD SAY THAT...

...AND I AM COOL WITH THAT.

CICERO WAS TERRIFIED THAT GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE FIXES EVERYTHING, SETTING UP AN INESCAPABLE CAUSAL ORDER, IN WHICH WHAT WE IMAGINE TO BE OUR FREEDOM IS ILLUSION.

1. CHICKEN FINISHES COOKING AT HIGH TEMP, DOOR TO OVEN OPENS. THERMOMETER SETS OFF HEAT SENSOR, CAUSING AUTOMATIC PYRAMID SEAL TO ENGAGE.
2. FISHING LINE RAISES BANANA OUT OF BANANA CAN.
3. REDUCED WEIGHT FROM BANANA LEAVING CAN LIFTS ARM MECHANISM, UNTIL HAND MAKES CONTACT WITH FAN, TURNING ON FALL.
4. BANANA INTERESTS MONKEY, WHO JUMPS OFF POLE; POLE LOWERS, ENGAGING MECHANISM, WHICH RAISES KNIFE THROUGH BANANA WRAP, WHICH UNTIL NOW HAD BEEN HOLDING BOWLING BALL.
5. FALLING BOWLING BALL YANKS ROPE DOWN, THUS RAISING WINDOW.
6. RAISED WINDOW ALLOWS CHICKEN SMELL TO WAFT OUTSIDE, STIMULATING CEDRIC TO HUNGER FOR DINNER.

APPARENTLY GOD'S CAUSAL ORDER IS INSPIRED BY ROVe GOLDBERG.

OH, SURE, IT'S EASY FOR YOU TO LAUGH! EVERYTHING A BIG COSMIC JOKE FOR YOU?

GOD BELIEVERS!

WHERE YOU HAVE THE DECRET TO 2500 YEARS OF JEWISH JOKES!
RELGIOUS PEOPLE SIMPLY HAVE TO FACE FACTS - AN ALL KNOWING GOD LEADS TO A DILEMMA:

1. GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS, EVER.
2. WHATEVER GOD KNOWS TO OCCUR, WILL OCCUR.
3. SO EVEN IF WE THINK WE ACT FREELY, WE DON'T.

OR

WHAT IF GOD'S JUST NOT PAYING ATTENTION?

SOMEHOW THAT'S NEVER AN OPTION IN ARGUMENTS LIKE THIS...

A. WE AND WE ALONE CHOOSE HOW WE ACT.
B. GOD HAS NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.
C. SO GOD'S NOT REALLY THAT BIG A DEAL.

"AGAINST SUCH PROFANE AND IRREVERENT IMPUDENCE WE ASSERT BOTH THAT GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN AND THAT WE ACT BY OUR FREE WILL!..."

AND THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FATE OR DESTINY, EITHER!

LOOK

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN
1. EVERYTHING HAPPENS.
2. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE FREE WILL.

LUCK BE A LADY... TONIGHT!
All that happens, the blowing winds, the rain, the storm, the sea, the birds, and the beasts, and all our actions is brought about by God—except for human evil.

And everything that bodies do is subject to God's will—even if people will evilly...

So people will evil as part of God's plan?? Monstrous!

No—evil is the result of human wills malfunctioning, which is not part of God's plan.

The word "necessity" seems to terrify people, as if the necessity of God's foreknowledge would turn us all into puppets!

Better to put it this way: God necessarily knows that we will freely, save when we sin.
"The fact that God foreknew that a man would sin does not make a man sin; on the contrary, it cannot be doubted that it is the man himself who sins just because God, whose providence cannot be doubted, has foreseen that the man himself would sin. A man does not sin unless he wills to sin; and if he had not willed to sin, God would have foreseen that."  
BK 5, CH. 10

GOD IS THE SUPREME REALITY: OMNIPOTENT, CREATOR OF EVERY SOUL AND EVERY BODY. He gives to man reproductive life, which we share with plants, the life of the senses, which we share with animals, and the life of intellect, shared only with angels. He is the source of all that exists in nature, and cares for the smallest part of the tiniest creature, which is in harmony with all other things, through him.  
BK 5 c. 11
Now Where Were We?

Ah, in the last book, I showed how the Roman gods had no power, and I've just finished showing how "Destiny" is a fiction.

Sallust thought that two consuls in particular exemplified Roman virtues - Cato and Caesar.

(Recollect that they hated each other...)

So when Rome got rid of their monarchy, they created the office of consul instead, for two men chosen every year for their justice.

Ah, the Senate selected you, too. I thought you seemed just...

Caesar embodied the virtues of dominion, stalwart courage, and insightful command.

I command you to dominate with stalwart courage, men!

Cato was even greater. He sought no glory or honor and spoke truth to power.

"It was not with weapons that our ancestors built Rome! It was with the rule of law, with tireless use of the land, with wise policy—all lost now! Now we have self-indulgence and greed, public poverty and private wealth! We praise riches, and embody laziness, we make no difference between good and evil men. Ambition and intrigue lead to public acclaim. Each of you thinks only of yourself! At home, you are slaves to your lusts, and to money and influence in public. Our republic is wide open to attack!"

Sallust, Bellum Catilinae 82
A CRUCIAL PROBLEM THAT AFFLICTED ROME FROM THE BEGINNING WAS THEIR LEADERS' HUNGER. FOR PRAISE, THEY HAD TO BE FAMOUS!

IT VEXES ME, QUINTUS, THAT I AM ONLY KNOWN IN A SMALL PART OF THE WORLD...

THE APOSTLES AND MARTYRS DID EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE – THEY COURTEO UNIVERSAL OPPOSITION BY PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

WAIT A MOMENT, CENTURION – HAVE YOU HEARD THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST?

JESUS IS REALLY GREAT!

THOSE GREAT VIRTUOUS MEN OF ROME WHO ACTED NOBLY, HONORABLY, AND WELL, RECEIVED THEIR REWARD FROM GOD: THEY RECEIVED THEIR REWARD IN FULL.

MATT. 6:2

I SAY, NOBLE MARCUS – DO YOU SENSE SOMETHING...

...MISSING?

MMM...NO.

BUT HONESTLY – WHAT DID ALL THIS ROMAN HONOR DO TO THE LAND AND PEOPLE THAT ROME CONQUERED?

BIG NEWS, SHEEPIES! ROME HAS CONQUERED US! NOW WE ARE ROMAN!!

DURING THE WAR WITH CARTHAGE, MARCUS REGULUS WAS CAPTURED. HE WAS SENT TO ROME TO NEGOTIATE FOR PEACE, AND FAILED. BUT HE HAD GIVEN HIS WORD TO RETURN TO CARTHAGE IF HE FAILED – AND HE DID!

Hi! I CAME BACK!

ARE YOU CRAZY? DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE'LL DO TO YOU?*

A MAN'S GOTA DO WOTTA MAN'S GOTA DO...

SURELY A CHRISTIAN CAN DO AS MUCH! *SEE BK.1

IF WE CHRISTIANS CAN'T BE AT LEAST THAT GOOD, THEN WHAT GOOD ARE WE??

*ER...NO GOOD?

...NO GOOD??!
There is a notable difference between a desire for glory and a hunger for dominion. Those who seek power, yet are always attuned to the thoughts of others, want glory. Those who care not at all about others, yet seek power, are dangerous.

The truly righteous gains glory while despising flattery, and even loves his enemies. He thinks not of himself.

Most leaders seek glory, and do good, ever watching the thoughts of others. They may appear to hate glory, but they love it.

Those leaders who ignore glory but lust for dominion are given power by God - to punish the people.

Obviously Augustine didn't use John Paul II, Washington, and Stalin. He doesn't give examples, so I provide...

Some philosophers mock virtue by making the virtues slaves to queen pleasure. But it is equally horrible to mock virtue by enslaving them to fame and glory.

Is it the virtue of its citizens, or its great leaders, that makes an Empire great? No! It is go alone!

Still... it doesn't hurt to be virtuous...

It is the same for war - they last as long as God wills.

Hey Centurion - do you think God will bring us victory?

They don't pay me to think.

How easy it is for the pagans to forget God's gift of a painless victory at Fiesole, where Stilicho destroyed the pagan Radagaisus! I wouldn't mind forgetting...

Yes, Radagaisus (470 A.D.)
A Christian emperor rules with justice, and amidst praise and the worship of many, they abandon pride.

Constantine began as son of a pagan co-emperor, stationed in faraway Britain. They revenge wrong deeds because of the need to protect the state, not for personal vengeance.

Maxentius has plunged Rome into civil war—he must be stopped!

Unfortunately, the son-in-law of the other co-emperor attempted to overthrow him.

They grant pardon not to condone wrongdoing, but to amend the wrongdoer.

It's a nice place, isn't it? ...Don't worry, you don't have to say yes.

After founding a new Rome, Constantineople, he built new alliances with his sometime foes.

A Christian emperor puts his power in the service of God's majesty, to extend his worship far and wide.

When his father died, Constantine left Britain and travelled to Rome.

They put their power in the service of God, to spread his worship far and wide.

In this sign, you shall conquer!

Constantine adopted the sign of a cross and beat Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312.

And all this they do not with a burning desire for glory, but for love of salvation.

You'll thank me, Rome. If not now, you will in the afterlife.

With the Edict of Milan, Constantine set the stage for all of Rome to be Christian in 325.
Constantine's rule was long and successful. After he died, God allowed his successors to rule for but a short time—as a warning that no emperor ought to become Christian simply to earn Constantine's good fortune.

Julian abandoned Christianity and died in combat.

Jovian returned to the faith, but died of poisoning in his bed.

 Gratian served as a virtuous emperor, but died in combat.

Gratian's younger brother, Valentinian, was perceived as weak, and many tried to overthrow him. Theodosius protected him.

Why are you protecting me? Because it's the right thing to do.

Valentinian died anyway, somehow. Eusebius tried to take the throne, and in battle, a great wind came and blew away all his spears!

Holy Stercorum! Look at all the troops Theodosius has!

Ah, the wind.

Theodosius won.

Theodosius was the model Christian emperor. Except for when circumstances compelled him to lay waste to Thessalonica...

I don't know what came over me...

Well, they were Greek.

But he readily submitted himself to penance under the direction of Ambrose of Milan.

I have completed the argument of the first five books, and proven that those who worship the pagan gods are fools.

Word has come to me that my opponents have been busy writing a reply. A word of warning: don't bother. It is easy for someone to imagine that he has made a reply just because he has not kept silent.

Is anything more full of words than folly?
IN THE SIXTH BOOK, WE LEARN OF VARRO'S OPINION ON THE THREE KINDS OF RELIGION "VARRO, YOU ARE THE SHREWDEST OF MEN."
In the first five books, I have shown the foolishness of attributing any exactly good to the pagan gods. But is it reasonable to ask them for life eternal?

O honored Artemis, all my life I have prayed for wisdom, yet I remain stupid, but I am still faithful to you, will grant me eternal life...

Varro composed an encyclopedia of Roman religious practices and beliefs that provides a detailed explanation of the pagan religion, including extensive treatises on...

The people who perform the rites... The kinds of places in which the rites take place... The times of the year for the rites... The nature of the rites...

It is especially interesting that Varro wrote numerous treatises about history before addressing religion—clearly showing that religion is a human invention. Human communities precede their institutions!

The gods are in the trees!

...The what?

Varro is a subtle writer! In arranging things so, he suggests that people invented these stories about the pagan gods... clever fellow.
VARRO DIVIDES THEOLOGY INTO THREE TYPES. THE FIRST TYPE IS "FABULOUS," FROM THE FABLES AND TALES OF THE POETS. THIS IS ALL MYTH.

THE SECOND TYPE IS "PHYSICAL" THEOLOGY, IN WHICH THE NATURE OF THE GODS, THEIR ORIGINS, AND WHAT THEY ARE MADE OF, ARE THE TOPICS.

PYTHAGORAS SAYS THE GODS ARSE FROM THE NUMBERS...

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FINALLY, THERE IS "CIVIL" THEOLOGY, WHICH KEEP THE CITIZENS IN TUNES AND CITIES WELL ORGANIZED AND TRUSTING IN JUSTICE.

BUT THESE CATEGORIES ONLY GO SO FAR. AS VARRO DESCRIBES THEM, THE THEOLOGY OF THE POETS AND THAT OF JUSTICE ARE THE SAME THING.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE. ONE DAY, A BOY WHO WORKED IN THE TEMPLE OF HERCULES WAS KILLING TIME PLAYING DICE, PRETENDING TO PLAY AGAINST HERCULES.

HE LEFT, SO HE TREATED HERCULES TO DINNER. AND A TEMPLE PROSTITUTE NAMED LARENTIA: HE GRACIOUSLY STOOD IN FOR HERCULES.

BABY NEEDS A NEW PAIR OF SHOES!

CAN YOU MAKE PAYING THE POLL TAX MORE PROSAIC? CAN, I DUNNO, HERCULES BE INVOLVED SOMEHOW?

LEMAH THINKS

TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT MYSELF? WELL, FOR ONE THING, I'M A GRACIOUS LOSER...
Larentina went back to the temple and went to bed. That night she dreamed about having an assignation with Hercules, who had good news...

The first man you meet tomorrow and you'll be set, babe.

Next day she met Tarutins, handsome and rich. They didn't exactly get married, but they had a nice life together.

Let's not tell your wife. Yes, let's not.

Many years later she died a very wealthy woman, and left all her money to the Roman people. Not surprisingly, they made her a goddess.

On behalf of a grateful people may I say,

Yes, yes, yes. Have me named a goddess and we'll be even.

A lovely—and obviously continued—story. There are others, though... so horrific as to cause one to wonder whether they have any meaning!

Saturn's Whistle Time

Arise, consuming all that it brings into existence...

And the ridiculous number of all the gods with their special functions is beyond belief. Why, there are Educa and Potina... one is for feeding infants' milk, and the other, solid food!

They just don't get any quieter, do they?

Seneca was tougher in mind than Varro. He was outspoken in the eternity and unreasonableness of many ceremonies...

A man castrates himself! If this is how he gains divine favor, what happens when the gods are angry?

True, Origen castrated himself... that was different.
Seneca is pitiless in scorning the false emotions worshippers undergo during the yearly ritual of the Egyptian Mysteries.

He was equally scornful of Jews, whom he felt wasted one-seventh of their days in empty Sabbath keeping.

Seneca was silent about the Christians, possibly because he liked them.

Paul of Tarsus?
Another letter for you from Caesar's teacher. You famous 'r'somethin'?

(Augustine believed that Seneca and St. Paul carried on correspondence. People believed this until into the 18th century.)

Have I convinced you that the pagan gods are worthless and give men diddly squat? Have I? Our god gives us eternal life, and no other god does!

...I'm worried that you're not convinced.
A DAMNED MINUTE!!

NOW JUST

WE HAVEN'T BEEN
SPENT THE LAST SIX BOOKS PROVING THAT THEIR RELIGION WAS A FALSE TRE, etc. etc. etc.??

IN WHAT FOLLOW, I WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THE FAMOUS GODS OF ANCIENT OME ARE PATIENTLY EMPTY AND POWERLESS TO EFFECT ANYTHING NOT OF THEIR OWN WILLING.

WHO CALLS THESE SELECT GODS?? WE'RE ALL IDIOTS ABOUT SOMETHING, WE WORSHIP DUNITY NOT FOR OUR SAKE IN THIS LIFE.

OH LORD! THANK YOU FOR THIS DAY...

ARE YOU NUTS??

LET US BEGIN THIS SEXTANT BOOK BY COMING CLEAR ABOUT SOMETHING; WE WORSHIP DUNITY NOT FOR OUR SAKE IN THIS LIFE...

FAIR ENOUGH, YOU DESERVE TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

CAN'T WE MOVE ON??

YEAH, WE'RE NOT STUPID, Y'KNOW...

WE WORSHIP DUNITY BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF GRAVITATION, WHICH IS ETERNAL!

WAIT... WHY AM I HERE??

BECAUSE I PRAYED FOR YOU... SO I'M STUCK WITH YOU! HERE FOR ETERNITY??

...
Polytheism is pretty much the default religion for all human history up to now... until Christianity came along, it was just the Jews with only one God.*

* If Augustine had heard of Zoroastrianism, he didn’t let on.

All well and good, you say.
But surely it was more than religion that doomed Rome to fall?

EXACTLY!!

And all of these are true because the Roman religion was false!

Look: society based on false religion, but society built on Christianity is life and hope!!

This is why, after about a thousand years of Europe having thought about society the way Augustine described it, this happened:

Hello, we noticed that your society is built upon a patently false religion. So, it’ll have to go, I’m afraid.
Anyway, the great Varro identifies twenty "select" gods:

What makes them "select"? It looks as if Varro calls them this because they have lots of varying responsibilities.

Mercury is responsible for...

Poes... 

Artificers... 

Calenders... 

Travellers... 

Thieves...

Who knows what led to a god being given responsibility for a given group of people?

Yeah, I can see me lookin' after snake handlers and maybe jockeys, and flower delivery guys...

Let's face it- most people do what they do for one of two things: love or money... but money isn't even a god!

... I am, sweetie... ...Well, I'm more a god of wealth than money per se.

Venus

Dis Potiber

Some of the lesser gods seem to have been generally honorable, which seems to have led to them being portrayed as freaks...

This is what happens if you don't "lose face"...
VARRO EXPLAINS ALL THE ANTHROPMORPHIC GODS AS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT, ITSELF AN ITERATION OF THE SOUL OF THE WORLD.

THIS WORLD SOUL, VARRO SAYS, BREATHES LIFE INTO ALL THINGS: IT IS THE GOD OF THE COSMOS...

VARRO THEN TURNS TO JANUS, WHO HAS 2 FACES BECAUSE SYMBOLIZES THE WORLD... SOMEHOW BECAUSE HE SEES BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS.

VARRO CALLED 'NATURAL THEOLOGY' BECAUSE HE THOUGHT IT WAS THE OLDEST AND DEEPEST TRUTH OF NATURE.

EVERYTHING IS A PART OF THE ONE...

AND EVERYTHING IS A PART OF EVERYTHING ELSE...

WHICH IS ALL ONE...

AND ONE ALL!!

IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT WHEN WE OPEN OUR MOUTHS, THE CAVITY COULD CONTAIN A TINY GLOBE, AND THE GREEK WORD FOR 'PALATE' IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SKY...

DO I NEED TO POINT OUT HOW RIDICULOUS THIS IS? GOOD GRIEF!

BE THAT AS IT MAY, VARRO MOVES FROM POOR JANUS TO JUPITER, OF WHOM VIRGIL SAYS,

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS FILLED WITH JUPITER.

HER DREAD SONS.

DON'T LET YOUR ASSUMPTIONS LIMIT ME!

OH, LET'S DROP THE FACADE! FOR ALL HIS POWER AND ABILITIES, ALL OTHER GODS CAN BE REDUCED TO JUPITER. WHY HAVE MORE GODS THAN HIM?

VARRO IMAGINES A SOUL THAT IS DIFFUSED THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE - THE 'WORLD SOUL'. THIS SOUL OF THE UNIVERSE LIES AT THE BASE OF ALL THE OTHER GODS... JUST CALL IT 'JUPITER'.

CITY OF GOD BK 7 CC 11-13
As for the other gods: Mercury, called Hermes by the Greeks, is language or thought, because he is so swift.

If I'm language, how can I be a god?

Mars is somehow the god of war. Is war a thing, like language? And what if people got along—what would Mars do then?

...probably this.

Mars and Mercury and Jupiter, all are planets, too. So why do the pagans not worship the signs of the zodiac, too?

This has not gone unnoticed, you know.

Indeed, we have been rather put out by it all.

My, my.

And regarding the earth—Vulcan is its fire, Neptune its water, Ceres its plants, Dis Pater its bowels, and Juno the great mother.

Well...it is a pretty big place...

Varro was not blind to these problems with the gods. Indeed, in an oblique way, he admits that all of this is uncertain.

How much of all this theology stuff is just opinion?

The most plausible explanation to all this is that the gods were once people who others admired quite a lot.

He wasn't just a prince among men... he is a prince among the gods!!
VARRO HAS SOME PIECE WITNESSING IDEAS ABOUT SATURN. HUMAN SACRIFICE WAS PRACTICED, HE SAYS, BECAUSE HE ATE HIS KIDS. SOMETHING TO DO WITH FERTILITY, SOMEHOW...

BE HONEST NOW—DOES THIS MAKE SENSE TO YOU?
ONLY IN THAT I'M NOT YOU, ALL.

AND NEPTUNE, GOD OF THE SEA, HAS TWO WIVES: ONE FOR SHALLOW WATER AND ANOTHER FOR DEEP WATER!

IT'S JUST... IT'S ALL...
I MEAN ISN'T IT...
AAAGH!!

AND THE DEPRAVITY OF THE WORSHIP OF THE GREAT MOTHER... WELP, IT SURPASSES DESCRIPTION! IT WAS A PERVERTED SEXUAL SAVAGERY! A SAVAGE SEXUAL PERUVERSION!

NAY, DEAR HUSBAND—DOES SAINT AUGUSTINE GIVE DETAILS?
NAY, GODDAMN! HE DOETH NOT.

IN ANOTHER CULT, DEVOTED SPUR MIDDAY FLOWERS ON THE GROUND... TO CONGURATE THE GOD GALLUS AND HIS SELF CASTRATION TO SHOW HIS LOVE FOR THE GOD ATTIS!

ANOTHER AMAZING FERTILITY CULT IS THE CULT OF LIBER, WHICH INVOLVES VENERATING A GIANT MALE ORGAN! THE IDEA!

OOPS. WRONG PICTURE. SORRY!

REALLY, IT ALL COMES TO A HEAD WHEN VARRO ADMITS THAT THE ONLY REAL GOD IS THE EARTH, WHOM HE CALLS THE "GREAT MOTHER."

JA, VELL, IT IS OBVIOUS ZAT VARRO IS TRANSFERRING FEELINGS FOR MY MOTHER IN SAYING ZIS.
(HIS MOTHER, I MEAN.)
LOOK - GOD SURPASSES ALL CREATED BEING SO THOROUGHLY THAT INVOLVING MATERIAL THINGS IN WORSHIP IS ONLY GOOD IF IT LEADS TO SPIRITUAL PURITY. SO YOU DON'T WORSHIP GOD IF YOU...

... INDULGE IN MONSTROUS IMAGERY...

... MUTILATE YOUR GENITALS...

... OR GARLAND THEM WITH FLOWERS...

... OR CONSECRATE EFFEMINATES.

UM... A DOZEN ROSES PLEASE...

... THORNLESS PLEASE.

SO... IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

VARRO TRIED TO KEEP THE PAGAN GODS SAFE IN HIS RATIONAL EXPLANATIONS, BUT HE JUST COULDN'T PULL IT OFF.

WHY WILL YOU INFERNAL GODS NOT BEHAVE??

EACH THINGS AScribed TO THE PAGAN GODS - AND MUCH MORE - IS REALLY THE WORK OF GOD - THE ONE TRUE GOD.

VARRO'S THEORIES

ONLY CHRISTIANITY HAS THE POWER TO REVEAL THE TRUTH ABOUT THESE GODS - THEY ARE DEMONS.

IT IS SAID THAT THE ANCIENT ROMAN KING NUMA WROTE OUT THE TRUTH BEHIND THE ROMAN RELIGION AND THAT IT WAS ALL BURNED WHEN HE DIED.

"THese rituals only exist to foster obedience and virtue in the citizens..."

... PHew! We can't let that kind of thing get out!

THAT SHOULD TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRUTH OF THE PAGAN GODS!

CITY OF GOD BCE 7 AD 26 - END
ENOUGH of the Roman Religion. We should turn to matters of more substance.
So we shall turn to the great philosophers who have addressed their minds to
understanding God.

These mighty Greeks actually made the leap
from a man-like God to a true, unified,
transcendent
divine being...
without the aid
of Scripture!

There were two schools of philosophy. The
first was the "Italian" school, founded by
Pythagoras.

The universe is
pure mathematics
in action!

\[ \beta^2 = \gamma^2 \]

...geometry lies at the
heart of science!
and avoid eating beans.
The guy behind the Pythagorean
theorem had firm beliefs.

The other one was the "Ionian" school,
founded by Thales of Miletus, said to
have taught that water is the origin
of all things.

Wet is what's what.

Members of the Ionian school tended to like explaining
the universe by attributing it all to one element.

AIR! AIR IS WHAT IS UP!
NO! IT IS FIRE!
RUBBISH! PARTICLES
ARE THE "UP"!

You fools - it is the
infinite mind!!

I mention these guys mainly
because the last of the Ionian
school was Socrates...

How can you discover the
truth of the universe if you're
not morally excellent?

...who shifted the focus of philosophy
from physics to morality.
Socrates had a pupil named Plato who brought life to the philosophical reasoning of his teacher.

Actually, Plato developed the first great philosophical system, and made Socrates his literary spokesman—the star of his many dialogues!

So... Socrates wins this argument, too? I da' know, Plato... isn't this getting a bit predictable?

Plato divided philosophy into three kinds:

- Ethics, which is comprehensible thanks to...
- Science, which depends upon...
- Logic

What makes Plato's philosophy such an improvement over the others? It provides us the way to perceive the truth about God—what is divine is not physical.

1. The Potter crafts the pot according to a mental image—an idea—that unlike the pot, cannot break.

2. The idea can be explained very well by math, which while the pot may die one day, will never change.

3. If math is forever and is abstract, and God is greater than math, then God is abstract and not in abody.

At least Augustine recognizes quality philosophy...

* This division of philosophy was more common in the Stoic school, opponents of Plato...
Plato recognized that everything that has a similar form gets it from the ideal, paradigm of that form. This paradigm is unchanging, timeless, and perfect.

At the highest level is pure truth, which Plato calls "the good." The highest act of our mind is pure understanding.

The next highest is truths of geometry + mathematics. This corresponds to our ability to reason.

Things in the world, in spatiotemporal being, have less reality. So does the knowing we have through perceiving.

Finally, flickering images of things, or pictures, or statues, have a mere imitation of reality—like our thoughts when we try to put them into words.

See Plato, Republic, bk 6.
OTHER PHILOSOPHERS ARGUED THAT HUMAN GOOD COULD BE LOCATED...

...IN HUMANS!

...IN THE HUMAN MIND

...IN BOTH BODY AND MIND

...IN THE HUMAN BODY

BUT PLATO RECOGNIZED THAT HUMAN GOOD COMES FROM OUTSIDE OF PEOPLE.

THE GOOD

OF ALL THE PAGAN PHILOSOPHIES I'VE STUDIED, PLATONISM COMES CLOSEST TO OUR CHRISTIAN POSITION.

CHRISTIANS MAY SHY AWAY FROM PHILOSOPHY BECAUSE OF SOMETHING ST. PAUL ONCE SAID...

TAKE CARE THAT NO ONE LEDS YOU ASTRAY BY PHILOSOPHY AND USELESS TEACHING!

COLOSSIANS 2:8

BUT HE ALSO SAID THIS ABOUT SOME GREEK PHILOSOPHERS...

WHAT CAN BE KNOWN OF GOD HAS BEEN REVEALED TO THEM, HIS INVISIBLE REALITIES...HAVE BEEN EVIDENT TO THE UNDERSTANDING THROUGH HIS VISIBLE WORKS.

ROMANS 1:19

SO WE CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO READ PHILOSOPHERS LIKE THE PLATONISTS IF THEY HELP US TO KNOW GOD.

JUST...WATCH YOURSELF, HM?
People wonder how Plato could have come so close to the truth of the faith. One story is that he met the prophet Jeremiah in Egypt.

Ah, hello. I am Plato...

...and I am the prophet Jeremiah.

Lovely! ...What is a prophet...?

But that probably didn't happen... Jeremiah had died a century before Plato had been born.

I don't know. Maybe he got a hold of the Book of Genesis. Maybe not.

...What's this?

A collection of books sacred to an obscure eastern people.

Mm hm... quite a language they seem to have there, eh?

By Plato's reasoning, all gods are good and an evil god is inconceivable.

I don't think that word means what you think it means...

Plato and his followers were the closest of all Pagans to the truth... even if most were Polytheists.

He says that the so-called 'evil gods' are actually demons, greater than men, but less than actual gods.

What's the good of being a god if you can't do whatever the hell you want??