

SOME PHASES OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY OF PATRISTIC CHRISTIANITY

BY HARRY ELMER BARNES, PH.D.

AT THE PRESENT TIME, when the problems of transition in political theory are attracting unusual attention, it might not be futile to consider the attitude of the Christian Fathers towards some of the major questions of social and political origins and organization.

The view of the founders of Christianity in regard to the nature of society was not fundamentally different from that of the Stoics—namely, the brotherhood of man in the spirit. The Christians were, however, a little more universal in this conception than the Stoics. The latter had, in reality, meant the brotherhood of the wise, or those who could participate through their reason in the divine *logos*. Christianity tended to break down this distinction between the wise and unwise and to emphasize participation in the universal brotherhood through the medium of faith and belief rather than through the exercise of reason.¹

When we come to search through the New Testament for doctrine regarding both the spiritual and secular aspects of its teachings, we are compelled to turn to Paul, rather than to Jesus. It is commonplace among all critical students of the history of Christian doctrine that the doctrines of Paul have been extremely influential.² Quite

¹ Carlyle, A. J., *History of Medieval Political Theory*, Vol. I, pp. 83-85; Matthews, Shailer, *The Social Teachings of Jesus*, Chaps. ii-iii; Janet, P. A. R., *Histoire de la Science politique*, I, pp. 279-289; Giddings, F. H., *Principles of Sociology*, p. 360.

² Bacon, B. W., *Jesus and Paul*. I have purposely omitted a discussion of Jesus' conception of the "Kingdom of God" because of the theological controversy which it involves. It is pretty generally admitted now, however, that Jesus had the same conception of the "Kingdom of God" which was common in the Messianic hopes of the Jews of his time.

in keeping with this general statement we find that the most important passage in the *New Testament* regarding the nature and institution of civil government is to be found in Paul's letter to the Romans. Here he points out most distinctly that civil government is a divine institution for the repression of evil and the promotion of good. He says:³

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; and the powers that are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good and thou shalt have the praise of the same; for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience's sake. For all this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are the ministers of God's services, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

This is a most influential passage, for it was frequently quoted during the Middle Ages. It was essentially the doctrine of the Stoics; something which might well be expected from Paul. The importance of the Pauline dogma is not its originality, but the fact that in this way it was turned from the pagan past into the general current of Christian ideas.⁴ However, this doctrine is not restricted to Paul but was equally clearly enunciated by Peter.⁵ It seems that the purpose of these *New Testament* writers in putting forward this doctrine of passive obedience to a divinely instituted government was two-fold. In the first place, they desired to relieve any suspicion that they shared any of the antipathy of the Jews towards the Roman government, and secondly, and more important, they wished to correct some of the anarchistic tendencies which were breaking out in the various Christian communities, who seemed to think that freedom from the Jewish ceremonial law meant freedom from all secular authority.⁶ Carlyle's summary of these points is very clear and definite:

We turn to the theory of the institution of government and here we find certain conceptions whose importance in the history of later

³ Romans, xiii, 1-7.

⁴ Carlyle, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 97-98. Janet, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

⁵ I Peter, ii, 13-17. Janet, op. cit., pp. 312-13.

⁶ Carlyle, op. cit., pp. 91-97.

political thought is very great indeed. The most important passage in the New Testament which is connected with this subject is the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. . . . This passage, which is of the greatest importance throughout the whole course of medieval political thought, being indeed constantly quoted from the second century onwards, is indeed pregnant and significant in the highest degree. It defines in the profoundest way the Christian theory of the nature of political society, while it furnishes us with the most interesting evidence with regard to the condition of the Christian societies of the Apostolic period.

St. Paul's general meaning is plain and distinct. The order of civil government is of divine institution, a thing deriving its authority and sanction from God Himself; to refuse to submit to it is to refuse to submit to God; obedience to the State is not merely a political necessity, but a religious obligation. But, we may ask, why is this so? Why are we to take the civil order of the State to be a divine institution to which we must render obedience as to God Himself? Here also St. Paul's answer is clear and distinct; it is because the end and purpose of civil government is to repress evil and to encourage the good. The civil ruler is God's servant for a good purpose; the good man need have no fear of the civil ruler, but only the evil man. To put this into the more technical phrases of political theory, St. Paul means that we must obey the civil order as having a divine authority, because it exists for the maintenance of justice. It is the just end of the civil state which gives it a sacred character.⁷ . . .

It seems most probable then, that St. Paul's vindication of the authority of the civil ruler, with the parallel expressions of St. Peter's epistle, were intended to counteract some anarchical tendencies in the early Christian societies, were intended to preserve the Christian societies from falling into an error which would have destroyed the unity of human life, and would have tended to put them in ruinous opposition to the general principles of human progress. We shall have occasion to see how this question is developed in the writings of the Fathers, and we shall then recognize how important it was that St. Paul had so clearly laid down the true principles of the religious conception of the state, and also how even the clearness of his treatment failed to save later Christian thinkers from a perversion of this conception.

When we consider the relation of this theory of the nature of government to the contemporary philosophical conception of the state, we find that it is both old and new. It is essentially the same theory as that of the Stoics, that man is by nature a social creature, that government is an institution necessary to the proper development of human life. St. Paul is translating the philosophical conception into the Christian conception of the divine order, and the translation has its real importance, but fundamentally the conception is the same. It is new in expression but the same in substance, and even the expression is, as we have already seen, to be found in such

⁷ Carlyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

contemporary writers as Seneca and Pliny. We shall have presently to consider the theories that grew up on this translation, but we shall see throughout our work that the translation was necessary if Christian civilization was to inherit the philosophical tradition of Aristotle and the Stoics. . . . It is therefore a matter of the greatest importance that St. Paul recognized the gravity of the question, and should have set forth his views with such distinctness and penetration.⁸

The Christian Fathers as the source of religious dogma and authority during the Middle Ages, to a degree scarcely second to the Scriptures, are most important in the history of the theories of the origin of society, state and government. While their writings cover some six centuries, nevertheless there is sufficient coherence in their doctrines to allow the Patristic to be discussed as a whole. Carlyle says on this point: "We are compelled to recognize considerable diversities of opinion among these writers, and we have endeavored to note these when they occur, and to discuss the relations of the different views to each other; at the same time, we think that it is true to say that in the main the Fathers represent a homogeneous system of thought."⁹

When we consider the fundamental doctrines of the Fathers relative to the institution of government, we find that they can be summed up in the four following propositions:

(1) Mankind is by nature social; society is thus a natural product (In this they held to the doctrine of Aristotle and the Stoics.)¹⁰

(2) The state of nature is identical with the condition of mankind before the Fall. In this condition mankind had no coercive government.¹¹

(3) Civil government was rendered necessary by the fall, as a remedy for the crimes and vices of degraded mankind.¹²

(4) While government was necessitated by the fall, nevertheless, it was a divinely devised institution to curb further evil; hence the rulers had their power from God and were the agents of God.¹³

The thing which was essentially new in the theory of the Fathers, as contrasted with that of the *New Testament*, was the introduction of the Stoic and juristic theory of the state of nature and its identification with the fall. Carlyle summarizes these main points in the Patristic theory as follows:

⁸ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 125-128.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 126-128; 147.

¹² Ibid., pp. 126-131.

¹³ Ibid., p. 147. Janet, op. cit., I, p. 314.

The Fathers maintain that man is made for society, that he is by nature sociable and inclined to love his fellow-men.¹⁴

Man is by nature made for society. But it is not by nature that man is the lord of man, it is not by nature that man is in subjection to man. . . . The primitive state of man was to these Fathers, as it had been to the Stoics like Posidonius and Seneca, a state without any coercive government; in the state of nature men did not need this.¹⁵

Coercive government has been made necessary through sin, and is a divinely appointed remedy for sin.¹⁶

It is unnecessary to multiply quotations from the Fathers to show that they all accept the theory of St. Paul, that Government is a divine institution. So far we are only concerned to make it clear how it is that we find the Fathers at the same time maintaining that Government is not natural and primitive, and yet that it is a divine institution. We have tried to make clear that this apparently self-contradictory position is really a perfectly intelligible, and, on its own terms, rational one. For man is not now in the condition in which God made him; once he was innocent and harmless, now his nature is depraved and corrupted, and conditions which would have been wholly contrary to his primitive nature are now necessary and useful.¹⁷

We have now to consider the theory of the nature and immediate source of authority in the Christian writers. We have seen that in their view the institution of Government is not primitive, but is made necessary by the vices of human nature. But Government is a divine institution, a divine remedy for man's sin, and the ruler is the representative of God, and must be obeyed in the name of God. It will be easily understood that the conception was capable of a development which should make the king or ruler the absolute and irresponsible representative of God, who derives his authority direct from God, and is accountable to God alone for his actions. This conception, which in later times became the formal theory of the Divine Right of the Monarch, was, as we think, first drawn out and stated by some of the Fathers, notably by St. Gregory the Great.¹⁸

In St. Gregory the Great, then, we find this theory of the sacred character of government so developed as to make the ruler in all his actions the representative of God, not merely the representative of God as embodying the sacred ends for which the government exists. The conception is, so far as we have seen, almost peculiar to some Christian writers. We have not observed anything which is really parallel to the conception in the legal writers, and even in Seneca and Pliny we have only indications of an attitude of mind which might be capable of development in this direction. The the-

¹⁴ Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

ory is a somewhat irregular and illogical development of the Christian conception of the divine character of the civil order.

It will naturally be asked, what were the circumstances under which this theory grew up? We think that we can trace the development of this conception to three causes: first, the need of correcting that anarchical tendency in the primitive Church to which we have already referred; secondly, the relation between the Christian Church and the Emperor after the conversion of Constantine; and, thirdly, the influence of the Old Testament conception of the position of the King of Israel.¹⁹

We may now examine a little more in detail the opinions of several of the more important of these Fathers upon their four fundamental doctrines regarding the origin of the state.

First, as regards the natural sociability of man, we find the doctrine strongly emphasized by Lactantius, one of the earliest and most learned of the western Fathers. Being converted only in middle life he had become thoroughly acquainted with pagan literature before his conversion. He wrote about 300 A. D. In his most famous work, *The Divine Institutes*, after reciting at length the respective views of the Epicureans, as represented by Lucretius, and the Aristotelian and Stoic opinions in regard to the origin of society, he shows that the scriptural doctrine opposes any idea that the human race was ever imperfect in the beginning or that its members were ever separated, so as to be able to unite by a compact. "But, however, neither (the Epicurean nor the Stoic view) is by any means true, because men were not born from the ground throughout the world, as though sprung from the teeth of some dragon, as the poets relate; but one man was formed by God, and from that one man all the earth was filled with the human race, in the same way as again took place after the deluge, which they certainly cannot deny. Therefore, no assembling together of this kind (i. e., compact) ever took place at the beginning; and there were never men on earth who could not speak, except those who were infants, everyone who is possessed of sense will understand."²⁰

In another work on *The Workmanship of God*, Lactantius points out the absolute necessity of society to human existence:

If man also, in the same manner (as the strongest beasts) had sufficient strength for the repelling of dangers, and did not stand in need of the assistance of any other, what society would there be? Or what system? What humanity? Or what would be more harsh than man? What more brutal? What more savage? But since he is feeble, and not able to live by himself apart from man he

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁰ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Book VI, Chap. x, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII.

desires society, that his life, passed in intercourse with others, may become both more adorned and more safe. You see, therefore, that the whole reason of man centers most of all in this that he is born naked and fragile, that he is attacked by diseases, and that he is punished by premature death. And if these things should be taken away from man, reason also, and wisdom, must necessarily be taken away.²¹

Augustine, the most influential, if not the most learned, of the Church Fathers was especially insistent upon the natural sociability of man. In section 1 of his *On the Good of Marriage*, he says: "Forasmuch as each man is a part of the human race, and human nature is something social, and hath for a great and natural good the power also of friendship; on this account God willed to create all men out of one, in order that they might be held in their society, not only by likeness of kind, but also by the bond of kindred."²² In the nineteenth book of his most famous work, *The City of God*, he further comments on this subject as follows: "We must give a much more unlimited approval to their (the pagan philosophers) idea that the life of the wise man must be social. For how else could the city of God either take a beginning or be developed, or attain its proper destiny, if the life of the Saints were not a social life? But who can enumerate all the great grievances with which human society abounds in the misery of this mortal state?"²³ The last query is an excellent example of the eschatological nature of all early Christian philosophy; the institutions of this world were at best but inferior and fleeting, and were only feeble mundane makeshifts to enable one to exist until the greater bliss of the future City of God might be realized with the resurrection of the Saints.

Finally, further on in the same work he says: "How much more powerfully (than is the case with animals who are usually social) do the laws of man's nature move him to hold fellowship and maintain peace with all men so far as in him lies, since even wicked men wage war to maintain the peace of their own circle."²⁴

The next three of the main points in the theory of the Fathers regarding the origin of the state and government, namely, the identification of the state of nature with the condition before the fall, the necessity of government as occasioned by the fall, and the divine nature of government, can best be considered together, as they

²¹ Lactantius, *The Workmanship of God*, Chap. iv. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII.

²² Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Sec. 1, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III.

²³ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIX, Chap. v, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. II.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. xii. See chap. xii passim.

are logically an organic whole, and, in addition, the Fathers usually treat the subjects in a connected passage. We shall, however, take them up as far as possible in the order given. In the works of Athanasius (295-373), the great opponent of Arianism, we have one of the best statements of the identification of the state of nature with the state of man before the fall. He says:

Exactly as the first of men created, the one who was named Adam in Hebrew, is described in the Holy Scriptures as having at the beginning had his mind to God-ward in a freedom unembarrassed by shame, and as associating with the holy ones in that contemplation of things perceived by the mind which he enjoyed in the place where he was—the place which the Holy Moses called in figures a Garden. . . .

Thus, then, as we have said, the Creator fashioned the race of men, and thus meant it to remain. But men making light of better things, and holding back from apprehending them, began to seek in preference things nearer to themselves. . . . They fell into lust of themselves preferring what was their own to the contemplation of what belonged to God.²⁵

In the writings of Irenaeus (140-circa 200), one of the leading anti-heretical writers of the second century, we find a clear statement of the theory of the origin of government in the fall of man and the attendant doctrine that it was a divine institution imposed as a remedy for sin. In his work *Against Heresies*, he says:

As therefore the devil lied at the beginning, so did he also at the end, when he said, "All these things are delivered unto me, and, to whomsoever I will I give them." For it is not he who has appointed the kingdoms of this world, but God. . . .²⁶

For since man, by departing from God, reached such a pitch of fury as even to look upon his brother as his enemy, and engaged without fear in every kind or restless conduct, and murder, and avarice; God imposed upon mankind the fear of God, in order that, being subjected to the authority of men, and kept under restraint by their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice, and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword suspended full in their view. . . . And for this reason, too, magistrates themselves, having laws as a cloak of righteousness whenever they act in a just and legitimate manner, shall not be called in question for their conduct, nor be liable to punishment. But whatsoever they do to the subversion of justice, iniquitously, and impiously, and illegally, and tyrannically, in these things shall they also perish; for the just judgment of God comes equally upon all and is in no case defective. Earthly rule,

²⁵ Athanasius, *Against the Heathen*, Secs. 2-3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. IV.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chap. xxiv, sec. 1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I.

therefore, has been appointed by God for the benefit of nations, and not by the devil.²⁷

This statement of Irenaeus is especially interesting, in that he assumes justice as the end of the organization of government and shows that unjust rulers may expect the wrath of God, though he does not advocate secular resistance to such rulers. A later and equally distinguished Father, Ambrose, also emphasized this idea of justice as the true end of the state. He says: "Justice, then, has to do with the society of the human race, and the community at large. For that which holds society together is divided into two parts—justice and good-will, which is also called liberality and kindness. Justice seems to me to be the loftier, liberality the more pleasing of the two."²⁸ Again, "It is plain, then, that equity strengthens empires, and injustice destroys them."²⁹

Augustine is as clear as Irenaeus in his statement that government was rendered necessary by the fall. He says, "He (God) did not intend that His rational creature, who was made in His image should have any dominion over anything but the irrational creation—not over man, but over beasts."³⁰ Further on he says, "But by nature, as God first created us, no one is the slave of either of man or of sin. This servitude is, however, penal and is appointed by that law which enjoins the preservation of the nature order and forbids its disturbance; for if nothing had been done in violation of that law there would have been nothing to restrain by penal servitude."³¹ Here Augustine contends that both the government and slavery had a common origin in the original sin of man.

As regards the divine authority of the government we have one of the first clear statements, after that of St. Paul, in the writings of Justin Martyr (110-167), the most eminent of the second century apologists. In his *First Apology*, he writes:

And everywhere we, more readily than all men, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes, both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Him; for at that time some came to Him and asked Him if one ought to pay tribute to Caesar; and He answered, "Tell me, whose image does this coin bear?" And they said, "Caesar's." And again He answered them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Whence to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and

²⁷ Ibid., sec. 2.

²⁸ Ambrose, *De Officiis*, Book I, Chap. xxviii, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. X.

²⁹ Ibid., Book II, Chap. xix.

³⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIX, Chap. xv.

³¹ Ibid.

rulers of men, and praying that with your kingly power you will be found to possess also sound judgment.³²

Tertullian in his *Remedy for the Sting of the Scorpion*, written about 205, also voices his approval of the divine nature of civil government: "Thus he (Paul) bids you be subject to the powers, not on an opportunity occurring for his avoiding martyrdom, but when he is making an appeal in behalf of a good life, under the view also of their being as it were, assistants bestowed upon righteousness, as it were handmaids of the divine court of justice, which even here pronounces sentences beforehand on the guilty."³³ But in his *Apology*, written about 198-204, Tertullian makes it plain that this recognition of the divine source of the Emperor's authority does not extend to the degree of making the Emperors objects of worship: "Augustus, the founder of the Empire, would not even have the title Lord; for that, too, is a name of Deity. For my part, I am willing to give the emperor this designation, but in the common acceptance of the word, and when I am not forced to call him Lord as in God's place. But my relation to him is one of freedom; for I have but one Lord, the God omnipotent and eternal, who is Lord of the emperor as well."³⁴

Augustine in his *City of God* emphasizes the divine authority of the tyrant as well as of the just ruler, "Nevertheless power and domination are not given even to such men (as Nero) save by the providence of the most high God, when He judges that the state of human affairs is worthy of such-lords. The divine word is clear upon this matter; for the wisdom of God thus speaks: (Prov. VIII, 15) "By me kings reign and tyrants possess the land."³⁵

Gregory the Great was probably most impressed of all the Fathers with the idea of the divine nature of secular authority. Among other passages the following is characteristic of his utterances: "So much, then, have we briefly said to show how great is the weight of government, lest whosoever is unequal to the sacred offices of government should dare to profane them."³⁶

The conception of the divine nature of secular authority was later a sad stumbling block to the Church, when the secular government came into conflict with the Church. Two divine institutions might readily exist side by side without involving any question as to superiority, as long as there was perfect harmony; when conflict and

³² Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chap. xvii, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I.

³³ Tertullian, *Scorpiace*, Chap. xiv, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III.

³⁴ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chap. xxiv, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III.

³⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, Book V, Chap. xix.

³⁶ Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, Part I, Chap. iii and passim, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XII.

discord came, however, it was difficult to decide which of two institutions, both divine, was to take precedence. While the history of this conflict belongs, in general, to a later period than the one under discussion, its beginnings can be detected even here. Janet says that among the Fathers of the first four centuries of the Christian era he can find but one unqualified statement of the superiority of the Church to the State, namely, that of John Chrysostom (344-407) the greatest of all Patristic orators.³⁷ Janet quotes from Chrysostom as follows: " 'Le roi,' dit-il, 'n'a que la tutelle du corps, le pêtre a celle de l'âme. Le roi remet les charges d'argent le pêtre efface les péchés. L'un contraint, l'autre prié. Le prince a entre les mains des armes matérielles, le pêtre n'a que les armes spirituelles. Le roi engage la guerre contre les barbares, le pêtre contre les démons. . . . Nous voyons dans l'ancien Testament que les pêtres oignaient les rois, et aujourd'hui encore le prince courbe la tête sous les mains du pêtre. . . . C'est ce qui nous apprend que le pêtre est supérieur au roi, que celui que reçoit la bénédiction est évidemment inférieur à celui qui la donne.' " ³⁸

In addition to this statement mentioned by Janet there is the famous incident of the clash between Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and the Emperor Theodosius, in which the former marked off things moral and spiritual as the exclusive domain of the Church and maintained that the Church was the earthly agency for spiritual and moral discipline as a preparation for heaven.³⁹

While the eschatological nature of the philosophy of the Fathers is not properly a subject for a paper dealing with the genesis of the state, still it is so prominent that it should be mentioned. The common doctrine, culminating in Augustine, was that all earthly institutions were but the temporary and insignificant mundane agencies whereby man existed during his pilgrimage on earth until he was translated by death into the blessings of eternity. Augustine gives the classic statement of this conception in his *City of God*. He says in part:

But the families which do not live by faith seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith look for those eternal blessings which are promised, and use as pilgrims such advantages of time and of earth as do not fascinate them and divert them from God, but rather aid them to endure with greater ease, and to keep down the number of those burdens of the corruptible body which weigh upon the soul. Thus the things neces-

³⁷ Janet, op. cit., p. 316.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 316-317.

³⁹ W. A. Dunning, *History of Political Theories, Ancient and Medieval*, pp. 155-156.

sary for this mortal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in using them. The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civil obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather that part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away. Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit, as the earnest of it, makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in what belongs to it.⁴⁰

We may now summarize the results of our investigation. In the writers of the *New Testament*, particularly Paul, we find an unequivocal statement of the divine nature and institution of civil government as an instrument for the furtherance of justice and the curbing of the anarchical tendencies of mankind. In the Christian Fathers this doctrine is combined with the conception of Seneca regarding the primitive state of innocence. Thus the doctrines of the Fathers might be summed up under four or five main propositions. First, that man is by nature social; second, that the state of man before the fall was similar to his condition in the golden age, as pictured by Seneca, and that in this condition coercive government was unnecessary; third, that government was rendered necessary by the corruption of man following the fall, but that while rendered necessary by sin, government was really a divinely appointed institution to curb sin; fourth, that as a divine institution, government vested its officers with divine authority, resistance to which was a sin as well as a crime; fifth, that all political and social institutions were of only passing importance as a means of making more endurable man's pilgrimage here on earth, pending his translation into the heavenly bliss of the City of God.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *op. cit.*, Book xix, chap. xvii.