

ancients, since civil laws are nothing other than the decisions delivered by the jurists of antiquity which, organized into a body of laws, teach the jurists of our own times how to render judgements, nor again is medicine anything other than the experiments performed by the doctors of antiquity upon which today's doctors and their diagnoses rely. Nevertheless, in organizing republics, maintaining states, governing kingdoms, instituting a militia and conducting a war, in executing legal decisions among subjects, and in expanding an empire, no prince, republic, or military leader can be found who has recourse to the examples of the ancients. I believe this arises not so much from the state of weakness into which today's religion* has led the world, or from the harm done to many Christian provinces and cities by an ambitious idleness, as from not possessing a true understanding of the histories, so that in reading them, we fail to draw out of them that sense or to taste that flavour they intrinsically possess. As a result, it happens that countless people who read them take pleasure in hearing about the variety of incidents they contain without otherwise thinking about imitating them, since they believe that imitation is not only difficult but impossible, as if the sky, the sun, the elements, or human beings had changed in their motions, order, and power from what they were in antiquity. Wishing, therefore, to extricate men from this error, I have deemed it necessary to write about all the books by Livy* that have not been taken from us by the hostility of time, what, according to my understanding of ancient and modern affairs, I judge necessary for a greater understanding of them, so that those who will read these comments of mine may more easily derive from them that practical knowledge one must seek from a familiarity with the histories. And although this undertaking may be difficult, nevertheless, assisted by those who have encouraged me to take on this burden, I believe I can carry it forward in such a manner that only a short path will remain for another to bring it to its destined goal.

PREFACE TO 1531 ROMAN EDITION

Considering how much honour is attributed to antiquity, and how many times (leaving aside many other examples) someone has purchased a fragment of an ancient statue at a great price to have it near him, to decorate his home, and to have it imitated by those who delight in that art, and how those artists with every diligence then strive in all their works to represent it, and, on the other hand, seeing that the most virtuous enterprises the histories show us to have been carried out in ancient kingdoms and republics by kings, generals, citizens, lawgivers, and others who have laboured for their native lands are praised with astonishment rather than imitated (indeed, are avoided by everyone in every way, to the extent that no trace of that ancient ability has survived), I cannot be but both amazed and saddened. And I am even more so when I see that in the civil disputes that arise among citizens, or in the illnesses that afflict men, we always have recourse to those remedies or those judgements that have been pronounced or prescribed by the ancients, since civil laws are nothing other than the decisions delivered by the jurists of antiquity which, organized into a body of laws, teach our contemporary jurists how to render judgements, nor again is medicine anything other than the experiments performed by the doctors of antiquity upon which today's doctors and their diagnoses rely. Nevertheless, in organizing republics, maintaining states, governing kingdoms, in instituting a militia and administering a war, in executing legal decisions among subjects, and in expanding an empire, no prince, republic, military leader, or citizen can be found who has recourse to the examples of the ancients. I am persuaded that this arises not so much from the state of weakness into which today's education* has led the world, or from the harm an ambitious idleness has done to many Christian provinces and cities, as from not possessing a true understanding of the histories, so that in reading them, we fail to draw out of them that sense or to taste that flavour they intrinsically possess. As a result, it happens that the countless

people who read may take pleasure in hearing about the variety of incidents they contain without otherwise thinking about imitating them, since they believe that such imitation is not only difficult but impossible, as if the sky, the sun, the elements, or human beings had changed in their motion, order, and power from what they were in antiquity. Wishing, then, to extricate men from this error, I have deemed it necessary to write about all those books by Livy that have not been taken from us by the hostility of time, what, according to my understanding of ancient and modern affairs, I judge necessary for a greater understanding of them, so that those who will read these discourses of mine may more easily derive from them that practical knowledge one must seek from a familiarity with the histories. And although this undertaking may be difficult, nevertheless, assisted by those who have encouraged me to assume this burden, I believe I can carry it forward in such a manner that only a short path will remain for another to bring it to its destined goal.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

What the Beginnings of Cities Have Always Been,
and What the Beginnings of Rome Were Like

Those who read about the beginnings of the city of Rome, about its lawgivers, and how it was organized will not be surprised that so much ability was preserved there over so many centuries, nor that afterwards it gave rise to the imperial power which that republic attained. In wishing first to discuss its birth, I must say that all cities are built either by men who are natives of the place where they are built or by foreigners. The first situation comes about when the inhabitants, scattered in many small groups, feel they are not living in security, since each group on its own, because of both its location and its small size, cannot resist the onslaught of anyone who may attack it, and in uniting for their defence when the enemy comes, they are either not in time, or even if they are, they are forced to abandon many of their strongholds, and in this way come to be ready prey to their enemies. Hence, to escape these dangers, moved either by themselves or by someone among them of greater authority, they draw closer to each other to settle in a place they have chosen which is more convenient to live in and easier to defend.

Among many others, Athens and Venice were cities of this type. The first, under the authority of Theseus, was built for similar reasons by scattered inhabitants; as for the second, once many peoples took refuge upon certain small islands that stood at the end of the Adriatic Sea to escape those wars that arose in Italy every day because of the arrival of new barbarians after the decline of the Roman empire, they began, without any particular ruler to give them orders, to live under those laws that they felt were most apt to sustain them. This turned out happily for them because of the long peace that the site afforded them; the sea had no harbour and the peoples tormenting Italy did not

in Syracuse with Dion and Timoleon, whose exceptional ability at different times kept that city free as long as they lived; once they were dead, the city returned to its long-standing tyranny.* But no more powerful example can be found than that of Rome, for, once the Tarquins were driven out, it was immediately able to seize and maintain its liberty; still, after Caesar, Gaius Caligula, and Nero died, and Caesar's race was extinguished,* not only could Rome never maintain its freedom but it could never even give it a beginning. Such dissimilar results in the same city arose from nothing other than the fact that in the time of the Tarquins the Roman people were still uncorrupted, while in those later times they were extremely corrupt. In that former time, in order to make the people steadfast and willing to avoid kings, it was enough merely to make them swear that they would never agree to the reign of another king in Rome, while in these later days, the authority and severity of Brutus plus all the eastern legions were not sufficient to make the people willing to maintain the liberty that he, like the first Brutus,* had restored to them. This arose from the corruption that the factions of Marius had established among the people; as the leader of these factions, Caesar was able to blind the multitude so that they did not recognize the yoke that they themselves were placing upon their own necks.

Although this example from Rome is preferable to any other, nevertheless, on this subject I want to bring forward examples of peoples known in our own times. Let me say, therefore, that no event, though it might be serious or violent, could ever have restored freedom to Milan or Naples, since their members were completely corrupt. This can be seen after the death of Filippo Visconti,* when Milan, desiring to restore its liberty, was not able, nor did the city know how, to maintain it. Thus, it was Rome's greatest good fortune that its kings quickly became corrupt, so that they were driven out, and long before their corruption had passed into the heart of the city; this lack of corruption was the reason why the countless disturbances that took place in Rome never caused any harm but, rather, benefited the republic, given that those men had good aims.

Hence, one can draw this conclusion: that where the material is not corrupt, disturbances and other disorders can do no harm,

and where the material is corrupt, carefully enacted laws do no good, unless they are initiated by a man who, with enormous power, causes them to be observed in such a way that the material becomes good. Whether this has ever occurred, or whether it might ever possibly occur, I do not know, because it is evident, as I declared above, that once a city has begun to decline through the corruption of its substance, if it ever manages to rise again, this occurs through the exceptional ability of a single man who is alive at the time and not through the exceptional ability of the people as a whole who support good institutions, and as soon as that man is dead the city returns to its former habits, just as in Thebes, which, through the exceptional skill of Epaminondas, was able to maintain the republican form of government and an empire while he was living but once he was dead returned to its former disorders.* The reason is that no single man can live long enough to train well a city long accustomed to bad habits. If one man with an extraordinarily long life, or one skilful ruler succeeded by another, does not set it back in order, the lack of such men, as I have said above, brings it to ruin, unless they have, at the risk of much danger and bloodshed, brought about its rebirth. Thus, such corruption and so little aptitude for living in freedom arise from an inequality that exists in the city, and if one wishes to bring the city back to a state of equality, it is necessary to employ extraordinary measures, which few know how or wish to employ, as will be discussed in another place in greater detail.*

CHAPTER 18

How a Free Government Can Be Maintained in Corrupt Cities If One Already Exists, or, If One Does Not Already Exist, How to Establish It

I do not consider it out of place or in conflict with the commentary above to consider whether or not it is possible to maintain a free government in a corrupt city if one already exists; or whether or not, if one does not already exist, it can be established there. On this subject, let me say how very difficult it is to

accomplish either the one or the other, and although it is almost impossible to supply a rule for the problem, since it would be necessary to proceed according to the extent of the corruption, nevertheless I do not want to omit this, since it is always good to discuss everything. I shall assume that the city in question is extremely corrupt, which will further increase this difficulty, because neither laws nor institutions will be found in it sufficient to check universal corruption. Thus, just as good customs require laws in order to be maintained, so laws require good customs in order to be observed. Besides this, institutions and laws established in a republic at the time of its birth, when men were good, are no longer suitable later, once men have become evil, and if the laws vary in a city according to circumstances, its institutions never or rarely ever change: this means that new laws are insufficient, because the institutions that remain in place corrupt them.

In order to clarify this matter further, let me say that in Rome there was the arrangement of the government, or rather, the state, and later on the laws that along with the magistrates kept the citizens in check. The order of the state encompassed the authority of the people, the senate, the tribunes, and the consuls, the means of proposing and appointing magistrates, and the method of making the laws. These institutions changed little or not at all according to circumstances. The laws holding citizens in check varied—as occurred with the law against adultery, the sumptuary law, the one against ambition, and many others—according to the way in which the citizens, in turn, became corrupt, one by one. But since the institutions of the state, which were no longer good amidst the corruption, remained fixed, these laws, which were renewed were not sufficient to keep men good, but they would have been very useful if, along with the innovations in the laws, the institutions had been changed once again.

That such institutions in a corrupt city were not good is clearly evident, especially in two principal cases, that is, in appointing magistrates and instituting laws. The Roman people did not give the consulate or the other key positions in the city to anyone except those who sought them. This institution was good at the beginning, because no one asked for these offices

except those citizens who deemed themselves worthy, and to be refused was disgraceful; as a result, in order to be deemed worthy of them everyone behaved well. This system later became extremely harmful in the corrupt city, because those with the most power rather than those who possessed the most ability asked for the magistracies, and those lacking power, no matter how able, refrained from asking for them out of fear. Rome did not arrive at this disadvantageous situation all at once, but rather by degrees, just as one falls into all the other kinds of difficulties, because once the Romans had conquered Africa and Asia and had brought almost all of Greece under their control, they became secure in their freedom and did not feel they had any other enemies capable of making them afraid. This sense of security, along with the weakness of their adversaries, caused the Roman people, in granting the consulate, to take charm rather than ability into consideration, raising to that rank those men who knew best how to please others rather than those who knew best how to conquer their enemies, and then, from those who had greater charm, they descended to giving it to men with more power, so that good men, through the defect in this institution, remained completely excluded from such offices. A tribune or any other citizen could propose a law to the people, and every citizen could speak either in favour or against it before the law was enacted. This was a good institution while the citizens were good, because it has always been proper for anyone who understood the commonweal to be able to propose a law, and it is right for anyone to be able to express his opinion of it, so that the people, after hearing them all, is then able to select the best. But once the citizens became wicked this institution became very harmful, because only the powerful proposed laws, not in the name of a common freedom but for the benefit of their own authority, and against them no one could speak for fear of reprisal, so that the people came to be either deceived or forced into deciding upon their own destruction.

It was therefore necessary, if Rome wished to remain free amid the corruption, that just as the city had created new laws in the course of its existence, it should also have created new institutions, because different institutions and ways of life must be established for a subject who is evil rather than good, nor can

similar forms exist in completely different substances. But since all these institutions must either be reformed all in a single stroke as soon as it is discovered they are no longer good, or little by little before everyone recognizes they are bad, let me say that both of these two alternatives are almost impossible. The wish to reform them little by little requires a prudent man to come forward who sees this problem from some distance and in its initial stages. It is very likely that an individual of this type may never emerge in a city, and even if one were to emerge, he might not be able to persuade others of what he himself has come to understand, because men used to living in one way do not wish to change, and all the more so when they do not see the evil for themselves but must have it demonstrated to them through abstract arguments. As for changing these institutions all at once, when everyone realizes they are no longer good, let me say that this ineffectiveness, though easily recognized, is difficult to correct, because to do so ordinary practices are no longer sufficient, once ordinary methods have become wicked, and it is necessary to turn to extraordinary methods, such as violence or arms, and to become, above all else, prince of the city and able to arrange it as one wishes. Furthermore, since the reorganization of a city into a body politic* presupposes a good man, whereas becoming the prince of a republic through violent means presupposes an evil one, we will discover, for this reason, that only on the rarest occasions will a good man wish to become prince through evil means, even though his goal might be a good one; we will also discover that equally rarely will an evil man who has become prince wish to govern well, or that it would ever enter his mind to use properly the authority he has acquired in a wicked fashion.

From all the above-mentioned factors arises the difficulty or impossibility of maintaining a republic in corrupt cities or of establishing a new one in them, and even if one had to be established or maintained there, it would be necessary to lead it more towards a monarchical than towards a popular government, so that those insolent men who cannot be improved [by the laws] would be held in check by an authority which is almost kingly. To try to make them become good by other means would be either a most cruel undertaking or completely impossible, as I said above concerning what Cleomenes did:* if Cleomenes

murdered the ephors in order to rule alone, and if Romulus killed his brother and Titus Tatius the Sabine for the same reasons, and afterwards they employed this authority of theirs well, we must remind ourselves, nevertheless, that neither the one nor the other had a subject stained by the corruption we have been discussing in this chapter, and they were, therefore, able to try and, trying, to put their plan into effect.

CHAPTER 19

After an Excellent Prince, a Weak Prince Can Maintain Himself; but After a Weak Prince, No Kingdom Can Be Maintained With Another Weak One

Considering the exceptional ability and the modes of conduct characteristic of Romulus, Numa, and Tullus, the first three kings of Rome, one may see that Rome enjoyed extremely good fortune, having a first king who was extremely fierce and warlike, a second peaceful and religious, and a third similar in ferocity to Romulus and more a lover of war than of peace. In Rome it was necessary for a founder of its civic institutions to arise during its earliest beginnings, but afterwards it was likewise necessary for the other kings to reclaim the ability of Romulus, since that city would otherwise have become effeminate and prey to its neighbours. From this fact, it can be noted that a successor who possesses less ability than the first ruler can maintain a state through the ability of the man who governed it before him, and can enjoy the fruits of his labours, but if it happens either that this successor has a long life or that after him no other arises who reclaims the ability of the first ruler, that kingdom must, by necessity, come to ruin. Thus, on the contrary, if two rulers, one after the other, possess extraordinary ability, it is often observed that they accomplish the greatest deeds and that their fame reaches as far as the heavens.

David was undoubtedly a man of the greatest excellence in arms, religion, and judgement; his ability was so exceptional that after he had conquered and overcome all his neighbours, he left to his son Solomon a peaceful kingdom, which Solomon was able

CHAPTER 55

How Easily Affairs Are Conducted in a City
Where the Populace Is Not Corrupted; and That
Where Equality Exists, a Principality Cannot Be
Created, and Where No Equality Exists, a
Republic Cannot Be Created

Although what is to be feared and hoped for from corrupted cities has been amply discussed above, nevertheless it does not seem beyond my purpose to consider a decision of the senate concerning the vow made by Camillus to give Apollo the tenth part of the spoils taken from the Veientes. These spoils had already passed into the hands of the Roman plebeians and since there was no means of accounting for them, the senate issued an edict ordering everyone to return to the public treasury the tenth part of what he had seized. Although this decision was not carried out, since, to the plebeians' satisfaction, the senate later adopted another means and other ways to please Apollo, it is, nevertheless, evident from such a decision how much that senate relied upon the goodness of the plebeians and how it judged that no one would fail to return exactly what the edict commanded them to return. On the other hand, it is evident that the plebeians did not think of cheating on the edict in any way by returning less than they should, but thought, instead, of freeing themselves from the edict by openly demonstrating their indignation over it. This example, along with many others that have been cited above, shows how much goodness and religion were in that people and how much good was to be expected from it.

And truly, where this goodness does not exist, nothing good can be hoped for, just as nothing can be hoped for in those provinces which in our own times are seen to be corrupt, as is the case in Italy above all others. Even France and Spain share to some degree in this corruption, and if in these provinces as many disorders cannot be seen as arise every day in Italy, this derives not so much from the goodness of their peoples, which in large measure has disappeared, as from their having a king who keeps them united, not only through his own exceptional skill but

also through the institutions of those kingdoms, which are not damaged beyond hope. It is quite evident that in the province of Germany this goodness and religion are still strong among the people; this causes many republics there to flourish in liberty and to obey their laws in such a fashion that no one outside or within these republics dares to occupy them. And to show it is true that a good portion of that ancient goodness still prevails in these republics, I wish to give an example similar to the one cited above about the senate and the Roman plebeians. When these republics need to spend some amount of money for the public welfare, the magistracies or councils that have the authority to do so assess all the inhabitants of the city at 1 or 2 per cent of their income. Once they have made this decision, according to the regulations of the city, each citizen comes before the tax-collectors, and after he has taken an oath to pay the proper sum, he throws into a strong-box designated for this purpose what, according to the dictates of his conscience, he thinks he must pay; of this payment there is no other witness except the person who pays. Hence, it is possible to surmise how much goodness and religion still exist in these men. It must be assumed that each citizen pays the right sum, because if this sum were not paid, the tax would not produce the amount they estimated on the basis of what they usually collected in the past; if someone did not pay the fraud would be recognized, and with this recognition, some means other than this would be employed. Such goodness is all the more to be admired in these times since it is so rare; indeed, it is clear that this practice has survived only in that province. This arises from two causes: the first is that they have no extensive contacts with their neighbours, for their neighbours have not gone to visit them, nor have they themselves visited anyone else, because they are content with these goods—to live on the foods, and to dress themselves with the wools the country produces; in this way, the reason for any contact and the beginnings of any kind of corruption have been eliminated, since they have not been able to take up the habits of either the French, the Spanish, or the Italians, nations which taken together constitute the corruption of the world. The other reason is that these republics, where an uncorrupted body politic has been maintained, do not tolerate any of their citizens acting or living like

noblemen: on the contrary, they maintain among themselves a clear equality; they are the mortal enemies of those lords and noblemen who live in that province, and if by chance some of them fall into their hands, they are killed as the source of corruption and the cause of every conflict.

To explain more clearly what this title of nobleman means, I will say that men are called noble who, in a state of idleness, live luxuriously off the revenue from their properties without paying any attention whatsoever either to the cultivation of the land or to any other exertion necessary to make a living. Such men as these are pernicious in every republic and in every province, but the most pernicious are those who, besides the aforementioned fortunes, also have castles at their command and subjects who obey them. Of these two kinds of men the kingdom of Naples, the papal states, Romagna, and Lombardy are full. Hence, it happens that in these provinces no republic or any body politic has ever arisen, for men of this kind are completely hostile to any form of civil life. And to try to introduce a republic into provinces organized in a similar way would not be possible, but to try to reorganize them, if there were anyone capable of serving as arbiter in such matters, would mean finding no other solution than to establish a kingdom there. The reason is this: that where there exists so much corrupt material that the laws are insufficient to restrain it, it is necessary to institute there, together with these laws, an even greater force, that is, a royal hand that with absolute and excessive power may impose a restraint on the excessive ambition and corruption of the mighty. This explanation can be verified through the example of Tuscany, where it may be observed how three republics, Florence, Siena, and Lucca, have existed over a long period of time within a small expanse of territory, and although the other cities of that province are in a way subservient to them, it is evident that with their courage or with their institutions, they maintain or would like to maintain their liberty. This is brought about by the fact that there are no lords with castles and very few or no noblemen in this province, but there exists such a state of equality that a prudent man with a knowledge of ancient civilizations could easily introduce a free form of government there. But Tuscany's misfortune has been so great that until recently, it has

not come upon any man who has been capable or knowledgeable enough to accomplish this.

It is possible, therefore, to draw a conclusion from this discourse: that anyone wishing to establish a republic where there are many noblemen cannot do so unless he first does away with them all; and that anyone wishing to establish a kingdom or a principality where there is great equality cannot ever do so unless he removes from that state of equality a large number of men with ambitious and restless spirits and makes them noblemen in fact, and not in name only, giving them castles and possessions and favouring them with goods and with men, so that when he is placed in their midst he may maintain his power through their support, while through his presence they further their ambition, and the others are forced to bear the yoke that force and force alone can make them endure. Since a proportion is established in this way between those who force and those who are forced, each man will remain fixed in his own rank. And since forming a republic out of a province well suited to being a kingdom, and a kingdom out of one well suited to be a republic, is a matter for a man who is rare in intelligence and authority, there have been many who have wished to do so but few who have known how to carry it out. For the grandeur of the task frightens men in part and in part hinders them and causes them to fail in the very first stages. I believe that this opinion of mine—that where noblemen exist it is impossible to organize a republic—will seem contrary to the experience of the Venetian republic, in which no one may hold any rank whatsoever unless he is a nobleman. To this objection, one can reply that such an example does not constitute any contradiction, because the noblemen of that republic are noblemen more in name than in fact, for they obtain no large revenues from their possessions, since their great wealth is founded upon commerce and moveable property. Moreover, none of them possesses a castle or has any jurisdiction over other men, but for them the title of nobleman is a title of dignity and respect without being based upon any of those qualities required in other cities for bestowing the title of nobleman. Just as other republics have divisions under different names, so Venice is divided into noblemen and commoners, and the Venetians allow only the former to hold (or to

be able to hold) all the offices, while the others are completely excluded. This does not create disorder in that city for the reasons stated on another occasion. The founder of a republic should, therefore, organize it where there exists or has existed great equality, and on the contrary, whoever institutes a principality should do so where there exists great inequality; otherwise, he will do something lacking in proportion and of brief duration.

CHAPTER 56

Before Important Events Happen in a City or a Province, Signs that Foretell Them or Men Who Predict Them Appear

How this comes about I do not know, but both ancient and modern examples demonstrate that no serious event ever occurs in a city or a province that has not been predicted either by fortune-tellers, revelations, extraordinary events, or by other celestial signs. And so as not to stray far from home to prove this, everyone knows that Brother Girolamo Savonarola had foretold before it happened the coming of King Charles VIII of France into Italy,* and that, besides this, throughout all of Tuscany people were said to have seen and heard soldiers fighting against each other in the sky above Arezzo. Everyone knows, besides this, that before the death of Lorenzo de' Medici the elder,* the highest part of the Duomo was struck by a celestial thunderbolt, with very great damage to that edifice. Everybody knows as well that a short time before Piero Soderini, who had been made *gonfaloniere* for life by the Florentine people, was driven out of the city and stripped of his rank, the palace itself was struck by lightning.* More examples of this could be cited, which I shall pass over to avoid tedium. I shall only recount what Livy says about the situation before the Gauls invaded Rome: namely, that a certain plebeian named Marcus Caedicius reported to the senate that, while he was passing through Via Nuova at midnight, he had overheard a superhuman voice warning him to tell the magistrates that the Gauls were coming

to Rome.* The cause of such occurrences, I think, must be discussed and interpreted by men who have the knowledge of things natural and supernatural, which we ourselves lack. It may be, however, as some philosophers maintain, that the air is filled with intelligences, who by means of natural abilities foresee future events and, having compassion for men, warn them with similar signs so that they can prepare their defences. Whatever the case may be, however, it is evidently true, for after such events, extraordinary and unusual things always happen in every province.

CHAPTER 57

United the People Are Courageous, but Divided They Are Weak

After their native city had been destroyed following the invasion of the Gauls, many Romans went to live in Veii against the statutes and orders of the senate: to remedy this disorderly behaviour, the senate, through its public edicts, enjoined everyone to return to live in Rome within a certain time period and under certain penalties. At first these edicts were ridiculed by those against whom they were passed; later, when the time to obey them drew near, everyone obeyed. Livy offers these remarks: 'their united defiance changed to individual obedience, everyone having fears for himself.*' And truly, nothing can demonstrate the nature of a crowd any better, in this regard, than what is shown in this text. A crowd of people is audacious in speaking out on many occasions against the decisions of their ruler; then, when they see the penalty in sight, they do not trust each other and race to obey. Thus, it is quite evident that you should not give much consideration to what the people say concerning their good or bad inclinations as long as you are organized in such a way as to be able to maintain the people's goodwill, if they are well disposed, or, if they are ill disposed, to make provisions so that they cannot harm you. This refers to those unfavourable inclinations that peoples possess, which arise from no other cause than either having lost their liberty or

their prince whom they loved and who is still alive: inasmuch as unfavourable inclinations arising from these causes are formidable above all else, strong remedies are required to check them; other unfavourable inclinations of the people are easily remedied when they have no leaders to whom they may turn. Whereas, on the one hand, there is nothing more formidable than an uncontrolled crowd of people without a leader, still, on the other, there is nothing that is weaker, because despite the fact that the crowd may be armed, it will be easy to subdue it provided you have a place where you can take refuge from its first assault, because when their animosity cools down a bit and they all see that they must return home, they begin to have doubts about themselves and think about saving themselves, either by escaping or by coming to terms. Hence, a crowd of people excited in this fashion that wishes to avoid these dangers must immediately select from its own ranks a leader who will guide it, keep it united, and think about its defence, as Roman plebeians did when they left Rome after the death of Virginia, choosing twenty tribunes from their own ranks to save themselves.* If this is not done, then what Livy says in the passage cited above always happens: that all together the people are bold, but when each one then begins to think of the danger he faces, he becomes cowardly and weak.

CHAPTER 58

The Multitude Is Wiser and More Constant
Than a Prince

Nothing is more unreliable or inconstant than a crowd of people: so affirms our Livy, like all the other historians. It often occurs that in recounting the deeds of men we see the crowd has condemned someone to death and has later lamented this fact and deeply regretted it, as we see the Roman people did with Manlius Capitolinus, whom they first condemned to death and then deeply regretted it. And these are the words of the author: 'Before long the people remembered only his good qualities, now that there was no danger from him, and regretted their

loss.* Elsewhere, when Livy is recounting the events that arose in Syracuse after the death of Hieronymus, grandson of Hiero, he declares: 'indeed, that is the nature of crowds: the mob is either a humble slave or a cruel master.*' I do not know if, wishing to defend an argument which, as I have said, all writers attack, I may not be assuming a task that is difficult and full of so many problems that it will be necessary for me either to abandon it, earning shame, or to pursue it, earning blame. But however that may be, I do not think, nor shall I ever think, that it is a mistake to defend any opinion through arguments without using either authority or force.

I must say, therefore, that the defect for which writers blame the crowd can be attributed to all men individually and most of all to princes, for each person who is not regulated by the laws will commit the very same errors as an uncontrolled crowd of people. And this can be easily understood, for there exist and have existed many princes, and the good and wise ones have been few in number: I am speaking of princes who have been able to break the constraints that can correct them, among whom may not be numbered those kings who arose in Egypt when, in the most distant antiquity, that province was governed by laws, nor those kings who arose in Sparta, nor those who in our own days arise in France, a kingdom which is regulated more by laws than any other kingdom in our times about which we have information. These kings that arise under such constitutional natures we must consider in order to see if they resemble the multitude. Such a comparison must be made with a multitude likewise regulated by laws, just as they are, and that same goodness we find in these kings will be seen in that crowd, and we shall see that it neither rules arrogantly nor humbly obeys, just like the Roman people, who never humbly served nor arrogantly ruled, while the republic endured uncorrupted; indeed, with their institutions and magistrates, they held to their ranks honourably. When it became necessary to rise up against a powerful individual, they did so, as can be seen in the cases of Manlius, the decemvirs, and others whom they sought to suppress; and when it was necessary to obey the dictators and the consuls for the public welfare, they did so. If the Roman people

regretted the death of Manlius Capitolanus, it is not surprising, for they regretted the loss of his exceptional abilities, which were such that their memory alone aroused everyone's compassion, and they would have had the power to produce the same effect in a prince, because all writers believe the rule that exceptional ability is to be praised and to be admired even in one's enemies. Moreover, if Manlius had been resurrected amidst so much regret, the people of Rome would have pronounced upon him the same judgement as they had before, after they dragged him out of prison and a short time later condemned him to death; notwithstanding this fact, we can see princes reputed to be wise who have put to death some person and then deeply regretted it, as Alexander did in the case of Cleitus and his other friends, and as Herod did with Mariamne.* But what our historian says about the nature of the crowd, he does not apply to a multitude regulated by laws, as was the Roman people, but to an uncontrolled multitude, like the one in Syracuse, which made the same errors that angry and undisciplined men such as Alexander the Great and Herod committed in the cases mentioned. Still, the nature of the multitude is no more to be blamed than that of princes, for all err in equal measure when they err without fear of punishment. Besides those I have mentioned, there are many examples of this both among Roman emperors and among other tyrants and princes, where we can see as much inconstancy and as many changes in character as were ever found in any crowd.

I conclude, therefore, contrary to common opinion that says that peoples (when they hold power) are variable, changeable, and ungrateful, affirming that in them there exist no other sins than exist in particular princes. If anyone were to blame peoples and princes alike, he might be telling the truth; but he would be deceiving himself by excluding princes, for a people that exercises power and is well organized will be stable, prudent, and grateful no differently from a prince, or better than a prince, and will even be considered wise; and, on the other hand, a prince freed from the restraint of the laws will be even more ungrateful, variable, and imprudent than a people. The variation in their conduct arises not from a different nature (for this in all men is the same, and if there is a surplus of good, it resides in the

people), but from having more or less respect for the laws under which one or the other lives. Anyone who considers the Roman people will see that for 400 years they were enemies of the very title of king and lovers of the glory and the welfare of their native city, and he will see many examples displayed by them in Rome that bear witness to both of these qualities. If anyone were to remind me of the ingratitude that the multitude displayed against Scipio, I would respond with the same argument I made above when this subject was discussed at length, where it was demonstrated that peoples are less ungrateful than princes.* But with respect to prudence and stability, I would say that a people is more prudent, more stable, and of better judgement than a prince. It is not without reason that the voice of a people is compared with that of God, for it is obvious that popular opinion is wondrously effective in its predictions, to the extent that it seems to be able to foresee its own good and evil fortune through some occult power. As for making judgements, when the people hear two opposing speakers of equal skill taking different sides, it is only on the rarest occasions that it does not select the best opinion and that it is not capable of understanding the truth it hears. If in matters of courage or of seeming utility, as was mentioned above, the people errs, a prince will also often err because of his own passions, which are more numerous than those of a people. It is also evident that in the selection of magistrates the people make far better choices than a prince, for one can never persuade the people that it is good to elect to public office an infamous man with corrupted habits, something that a prince can be persuaded to do easily and in a thousand ways. It can be seen how a people may begin to loathe something and will remain of this opinion for many centuries, something that is not true of a prince. In both of these two matters I think the Roman people bears sufficient witness, for in so many hundreds of years and in so many elections of consuls and tribunes, they did not make four choices which they were forced to regret. And, as I have mentioned, the Roman people so hated the very title of king that no merit on the part of any citizen who aspired to that title could enable him to avoid the just penalties. Besides this, it is evident that cities where the people hold power quickly make enormous conquests and much greater ones than cities which

have always been under the rule of a prince, as Rome did after she drove out the kings, and Athens after she freed herself of Pisistratus. This can arise from nothing other than the fact that governments by peoples are better than governments by princes. Nor would I wish that all of what our historian says on this matter in the previously cited passage or in any other be used to counter this view of mine, because if we are to discuss all the disorders under peoples and all those under princes, all the glories under peoples and all those under princes, we shall see that in goodness and in glory, the people are by far superior. And if princes are superior to the people in enacting laws, forming civil societies, establishing statues and new institutions, the people are so much superior in maintaining the things established that, without any doubt, they add to the glory of those who established them.

Finally, to conclude this argument, let me say that just as the states of princes have long endured, the states of republics have long endured, and both have needed to be regulated by laws, because a prince who is able to do what he wishes is mad, and a people that can do what it wishes is not wise. If, therefore, we are discussing a prince legally bound by the laws and a people enchained by them, more ability can be observed in the people than in the prince; if we are discussing both of them in an unregulated state, fewer errors will be observed in the people than in the prince, and these will be less serious and will have greater remedies. But a good man can speak to an intractable and unruly people and can easily lead them back down the right path; nobody can speak to an evil prince, nor is there any other remedy for him than the sword. From this, one can speculate about the importance of their respective maladies: that is, if words are enough to cure the malady of the people, and that of the prince requires a sword, there will never be anyone who will not judge that where there is greater need for a cure, there exist greater flaws. When a people is thoroughly unrestrained, neither its foolish actions nor the evil at hand need be feared, but rather the evil that may arise from them, since a tyrant may arise amid so much confusion. But with evil princes the opposite happens: the present evil is to be feared and the future holds hope, since men persuade themselves that the prince's wicked life can cause a

state of liberty to arise. Thus, you see the difference between the two, which is the difference between things that are and things that are to be. The cruelties of the multitude are directed against those whom they fear will take possession of the public property; those of a prince are directed against anyone he fears will take possession of his own property. But this sentiment against the people arises because everyone speaks badly about the people without fear and in complete freedom even while the people rule; everyone always speaks badly about princes with a thousand fears and a thousand reservations. Nor does it seem beside the point to me, since this subject leads me to it, to discuss in the following chapter the kinds of confederations that are most reliable, those created with a republic or those created with a prince.

CHAPTER 59

Which Confederation or Other Kind of League
Is Most Reliable, That Created With a Republic
or That Created With a Prince

Because it happens every day that one prince and another, or one republic and another forge a league and a friendship with each other, and, likewise confederations and agreements are also formed between a republic and a prince, it seems proper to me to examine whose word is more reliable and should be given greater consideration, that of a republic or that of a prince. After examining everything, I believe that in many cases they are similar, and that in some cases there is some difference. I believe furthermore that agreements made by force will never be observed either by a prince or by a republic; I believe that when the fear of losing the state arises, both kinds of government will break faith with you and will treat you with ingratitude in order to avoid losing it. Demetrius, the man who was called conqueror of cities, had bestowed countless benefits upon the Athenians: then it happened that after he had been defeated by his enemies and sought refuge in Athens, as in a friendly city obligated to him, he was not received by that city; this grieved him even more than if

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

In Order for a Religion or a Republic to Have a Long Life, It Is Often Necessary to Bring It Back to Its Beginnings

It is very true that all the things of this world have a limited existence, but those which go through the entire cycle of life ordained for them by heaven are generally those which do not allow their bodies to fall into disorder but maintain them in an orderly way, so that either nothing changes, or if it changes, it is to their welfare, not to their detriment. Since I am speaking of mixed bodies, such as republics and religions, let me say that changes which bring such bodies back to their beginnings are healthy. The ones that have the best organization and the longest lives are, however, those that can renew themselves often through their own institutions, or that come to such a renewal through some circumstance outside these institutions. And it is clearer than light itself that if they do not renew themselves, these bodies will not endure.

The method of renewing them is, as was stated, to bring them back to their beginnings, because the beginnings of religions, republics, and kingdoms must always contain in themselves some goodness through which they may regain their early prestige and their early expansion. And because in the course of time that goodness is corrupted, if something does not come about to bring it back to its proper limits, it will, of necessity, kill that body. Those doctors of medicine declare, speaking of human bodies: 'Every day the body absorbs something that requires a cure from time to time.'* This process of bringing something back to its beginnings, when referring to republics, is produced either by some extrinsic accident or by some intrinsic prudence. As for the first means, it is evident how necessary it was for Rome to have been taken by the Gauls in order for it to be

reborn, and in being reborn, to take on new life and new vigour and to take up once again the observance of religion and of justice, which were beginning to become corrupt. This is very clearly understood through Livy's history, where he demonstrates that in calling out their army against the Gauls and in creating tribunes with consular authority, the Romans failed to observe any religious ceremony. Likewise, they not only failed to punish the three Fabii who had fought against the Gauls 'in opposition to the law of nations',* but they made them tribunes. It is easy to speculate that they began to take less account of the good regulations instituted by Romulus and other prudent rulers than was reasonable and necessary to maintain a free way of life. This blow from the outside occurred, therefore, so that all the institutions of that city might be reclaimed, and so that the Roman people would see not only that it was necessary to maintain religion and justice, but also to hold good citizens in high esteem and to place a higher value on their exceptional abilities than on those conveniences they felt were lacking because of their actions. It is evident that this is exactly what happened, because as soon as Rome was retaken, the Romans renewed the institutions of their ancient religion, punished the Fabii who had fought 'in opposition to the law of nations', and then honoured the exceptional ability and goodness of Camillus to such a degree that the senate and the others set aside their envy and placed back in his hands the entire burden of that republic. It is therefore necessary, as was said before, for men who live together under some kind of order to be required to reflect upon themselves, either by these extrinsic accidents or by the intrinsic ones. With respect to the latter, they must arise either from some law, which obliges the men who belong to that body to re-examine their affairs with some frequency, or, indeed, from one good man who is born among them and who, by his exemplary deeds and his exceptional works, produces the same effect as the regulation.

Such good, therefore, arises in republics either through the exceptional ability of a single man or through the special excellence of a single regulation. With respect to the latter, the institutions that brought the Roman Republic back to its beginnings were the tribunes of the plebeians, the censors, and all the other

laws that were passed against the ambition and the insolence of men. These regulations must be given life by the exceptional ability of a single citizen, who courageously strives to enforce them against the power of all those who fail to observe them. Among the ways in which these laws were applied before Rome was taken by the Gauls, the most notable examples were the deaths of the sons of Brutus, the deaths of the decemvirs,* and the death of Melius the grain-dealer; after Rome was taken, these examples included the death of Manlius Capitolinus, the death of the son of Manlius Torquatus, the attempt by Papirius Cursor to execute Fabius, his master of cavalry, and the charges against the Scipios. Because these events were unusual and worthy of note, each time one of them occurred they made men move back toward their proper limits, and when such events became more rare, they also began to give more space to men to become corrupt and to conduct themselves in a far more dangerous and disorderly manner. Thus, not more than ten years should pass between one of these applications of the law and another, because after such a period of time has passed, men begin to change their habits and break the laws, and if nothing arises to remind them of the punishment and to renew the fear in their hearts, the number of delinquents will soon become so large that they can no longer be punished without danger. Those who governed the Florentine state from 1434 until 1494 used to say in this regard that it was necessary to take the state back every five years or it was otherwise difficult to preserve it, and what they called 'taking the state back' meant striking the same terror and fear into the hearts of men that they had instilled upon first taking power, when they struck down those who had, according to that way of life, governed badly. But when the memory of such a beating fades away, men grow bolder in making new attempts and in speaking evil, and it is therefore necessary to make provision against this by bringing the state back to its beginnings.

This return to the beginnings in republics also arises from the simple talents of a single man, without depending upon a law which drives you on to its execution; such men are nevertheless of such reputation and exemplary behaviour that good men wish to imitate them and evil men are ashamed to lead a life

contrary to theirs. Those men in Rome who produced particularly good results were Horatius Cocles, Scaevola, Fabricius, the two Decii, Regulus Atilius, and some others, all of whom with their uncommon and worthy examples created in Rome almost the same effect that was created by the laws and institutions.* If the enforcement of the laws noted above, along with these particular exemplary actions, had occurred at least every ten years in that city, it would have necessarily followed that Rome would never have become corrupted, but as they became both few and far between, corruption began to increase. For this reason, after Marcus Regulus no similar exemplary actions were seen in Rome, and although the two Catos* rose up in Rome, there was too great a space of time between him and them, and then between the two of them, and they remained so isolated that they could not, with their good examples, accomplish any good work; this is especially true of the last Cato who, finding the city for the most part corrupt, could not, with his own example, make the citizens better. And this should suffice as far as republics are concerned.

But as for religions, it is also evident that these revivals are necessary through the example of our own religion which, had it not been brought back to its beginnings by Saints Francis and Dominic, would have died out completely; for these men, with their poverty and the example of Christ's life, restored religion to the minds of men where it had been extinguished; and their new institutions were powerful enough to prevent the dishonesty of the priests and leaders of this religion from ruining it; and by continuing to live in poverty and enjoying such trust among the people in the confessional and in their preaching, they made them understand that it was evil to speak ill of the evil, that it was good to live in obedience to them, and that if these priests committed errors, they should be left to the punishment of God. Thus, the clergy do the worst they can, because they do not fear that punishment they do not see and in which they do not believe. Thus, this revival has maintained and still maintains this religion.*

Kingdoms also need to renew themselves and to bring their laws back to their beginnings. What good effects this practice achieves can be seen in the kingdom of France, which lives under

laws and institutions to a greater degree than any other kingdom. The parliaments maintain these laws and institutions, especially the one in Paris, which renews them every time it takes an action against a prince of that kingdom and condemns the king in its judgements. Until now it has maintained itself as the obstinate opponent of the nobility, but any time it allows them to go unpunished and allows such offences to increase, then without a doubt these offences will either have to be corrected with great disorder or that kingdom will fall apart.

To conclude, therefore, nothing is more necessary in a community, whether it be a religion, kingdom, or republic, than to restore it to the reputation it enjoyed at its beginnings and to strive to ensure that either good institutions or good men achieve this effect and that it does not have to be brought about by some external force, for although an external force may sometimes be the best remedy, as it was in Rome, it is so dangerous that it is in no way to be desired. In order to demonstrate to everyone the extent to which the actions of individual men made Rome great and produced many good results in that city, I shall proceed to a narration and discussion of them; this third book and last part of the commentary on these first ten books of Livy will conclude within the boundaries of this topic. Although the actions of the kings were great and noteworthy, nevertheless since history treats them at length I shall leave them out and mention them only when they did something pertaining to their own private interests; and we shall begin with Brutus, father of Roman liberty.*

CHAPTER 2

How Very Wise It Is to Pretend to Be Mad at the Proper Moment

No one was ever as prudent as Junius Brutus, nor was anyone ever held in such high regard for any of his remarkable actions as he was for feigning stupidity. Although Livy expresses no more than one reason that led him to such pretence, which was to be able to live more securely and to maintain his patrimony, never-

theless, considering his method of conduct, it can also be believed that he feigned this in order to be less closely observed and to have greater ease in overthrowing the king and in liberating his native land, whenever he was given the opportunity. The fact that he was contemplating this can be seen first in his interpretation of the oracle of Apollo, when he pretended to fall down in order to kiss the ground, judging that if he did so he would have the gods in favour of his plans, and then when standing over the dead Lucretia in the presence of her father, husband, and other relatives, he was the first to pull the dagger out of her wound and to make the bystanders swear that they would never in the future tolerate any king ruling in Rome.*

From his example, all those who are dissatisfied with a ruler have something to learn; they must first measure and weigh their own forces, and if they are so powerful that they can reveal themselves as his enemy and wage war openly upon him, they must select this path, as less dangerous and more honourable. But if their condition is such that their forces are insufficient to wage open war on him, they must seek with great diligence to make themselves his friend, and to this end they must enter upon all those paths they deem necessary, following his wishes and taking pleasure in all those things in which they see he takes delight. This intimacy will, in the first place, allow you to live in safety and, without the risk of danger, to enjoy the ruler's good fortune along with him; it also provides you with every opportunity to carry out your plans. It is true that some will declare you ought not to live so close to rulers that their downfall will harm you as well, nor so far away that when they come crashing down, you would not have time to climb up on their ruins; this middle course would be the most reliable if it could be followed, but since I believe that it is impossible, it is necessary to reduce one's choices to the two methods described above, that is, either to keep your distance or to remain close to them. Anyone who does otherwise and is a man known for his merit will live in continuous danger. Nor it is enough to declare: 'I pay no attention to such things, I seek neither honours nor profit, I wish to live quietly and without trouble', for these excuses are heard and not accepted; nor can men who possess standing choose to do nothing, even if they truly choose to do so and are without any