5.10 George Buchanan: radical Calvinist

The most fascinating as well as the most radical of the Calvinist theorists of the late sixteenth century was not a French Huguenot but a Scot who spent most of his time in France. George Buchanan (1506–82) was a distinguished humanist historian and poet, who taught Latin at the College de Guyenne in Bordeaux. Buchanan was trained in scholastic philosophy at the University of St Andrews in the mid-1520s, where he studied under the great John Major. An early convert to Calvinism, Buchanan became a friend of Beza and of Mornay, and served as a member of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland.

British Calvinist thinkers of the 1550s, refugees from the Catholic rule of Queen Mary, had worked out in exile a justification for rebellion against tyranny in terms of the godly against idolatry. It remained to restate revolutionary theory in secular, natural rights, terms rather than in the strictly religious concepts of godliness and heresy. This feat was accomplished by the Scot George Buchanan, in the midst of a struggle of the Calvinist majority of Scotland against their Catholic queen. A revolution in 1560 had conquered the Scottish parliament for Calvinism in a now overwhelmingly Calvinist country, and seven years later the Calvinists deposed the Catholic queen, Mary Stuart.

In the course of this struggle, Buchanan, in 1567, began to draft his great work, *The Right of the Kingdom in Scotland*, which he published in 1579. Parts of Buchanan's argument appeared in speeches delivered by the new Scottish Regent James Stewart, Earl of Moray in 1568, and then in discussions between the Scottish and English governments three years later.

Buchanan began, like the Huguenots, with the state of nature and a social contract by the people with their rulers, a contract in which they retained their sovereignty and their rights. But there were two major differences. In the first place, Beza and Mornay had talked of *two* such contracts: a political social contract, and a religious covenant to act as a godly people. With Buchanan, the religious covenant drops out totally, and we are left with the political contract alone. Some historians have interpreted Buchanan's radical step as secularizing politics into an independent 'political science'. More accurately, Buchanan emancipated political theory from the directly divine or theological concerns of the Protestant founders, and returned it to its earlier base in natural law and in human rights.

More radically, Buchanan swept away the entire inconsistent Huguenot baggage of the people virtually alienating their sovereignty to intermediate 'representatives'. On the contrary, for Buchanan the people consent to and contract with a ruler, and retain their sovereign rights, with no mention of intermediate assemblies. But this puts far more revolutionary implications on natural rights and popular sovereignty. For then, when a king becomes

tyrannical and violates his task to safeguard individual rights, this means 'that the whole body of the people, and even individual citizens, may be said to have the authority to resist and kill a legitimate ruler in defence of their rights'. Thus, over two decades before the Spanish Jesuit de Mariana, George Buchanan had arrived, for the first time, at a truly individualist theory of natural rights and sovereignty and therefore a justification for individual acts of tyrannicide. Thus, in what Professor Skinner calls 'a highly individualist and even anarchic view of political resistance', Buchanan stressed that:

> Since the people as a body create their ruler, it is...possible at any time 'for the people to shake off whatever *Imperium*' they may have imposed on themselves, the reason being that 'anything which is done by a given power can be undone by a like power'. Furthermore, Buchanan adds that, since each individual must be pictured as agreeing to the formation of the commonwealth for his own greater security and benefit, it follows that the right to kill or remove a tyrant must be lodged at all times 'not only with the whole body of the people' but 'even with every individual citizen'. So he willingly endorses the almost anarchic conclusion that even when, as frequently happens, someone 'from amongst the lowest and meanest of men' decides 'to revenge the pride and insolence of a tyrant' by simply taking upon himself the right to kill him, such action are often 'judged to have been done quite rightly,...'.[17]

We have seen that the Spanish Jesuit, Juan de Mariana, developed a similar theory of Lockean popular sovereignty and of individual tyrannicide two decades later. As a scholastic, he too had a natural law contract and not any religious covenant at the base of his theory. Skinner ably concludes that

> The Jesuit Mariana may thus be said to link hands with the Protestant Buchanan in stating a theory of popular sovereignty which, while scholastic in its origins and Calvinist in its later development, was in essence independent of either religious creed, and was thus available to be used by all parties in the coming constitutional struggles of the seventeenth century.

More typical, however, of the dominant strand of radical Calvinism emerging from the sixteenth century was the distinguished Dutch jurist, Johannes Althusius (1557–1638). His *magnum opus* was his treatise of 1603, *Politics Methodically Set Forth*. Althusius built upon and was similar to Mornay and the Huguenot theorists. With them, he retained the pre-Lockean popular sovereignty with consensual revocable delegation to the king, and also with them he mediated that sovereignty through representative assemblies and associations. In addition, the justification of individual tyrannicide disappears. However, one innovation of Buchanan's was retained in Althusius' massive treatise: the dropping of any religious covenant. Indeed, Althusius is more explicit, attacking theologians for infusing their political writings with

'teachings on Christian piety and charity', and failing to realize that these matters are 'improper and alien to political doctrine'.

5.11 Leaguers and *politiques*

While the Huguenot monarchomachs have been far more extensively studied than their Catholic counterparts of the late sixteenth century, the latter are an interesting and neglected group. After the accession of King Henry III in 1574, it began to be clear that the Huguenots were no longer in danger of annihilation, and that, on the contrary, it seemed that Henry was soft on Protestants. This softness became an acute problem for the Catholics of France in 1584, when the death of the heir to the throne, the Duc d'Alençon, brought into the first line of succession Henry of Navarre, a committed Calvinist. This threat brought into being the Catholic League, especially in Paris, then the heartland of French Catholicism. The League, headed throughout France by the Duc de Guise, rebelled against Henry and drove him out of Paris. As we have seen, Henry's treacherous assassination of Guise and his brother the cardinal during a peace parley led to a mighty act of tyrannicide, in which the young Dominican priest, Jacques Clément, on 1 August 1589, avenged the Guises by assassinating Henry III.

Paris under the Catholic League was run by a council of 16, supported by the middle classes, professionals and businessmen, and backed fervently by virtually all the priests and curés in the city. The most radical of the Leaguer thinkers, who flourished during the 1580s and 1590s, was a leading attorney, François LeBreton, who, in his *Remonstrance to the Third Estate* (1586), bitterly attacked the king as a hypocrite, advocated a French republic, and called for revolution and civil war to attain it. LeBreton was promptly executed by the Parlement, the leading judicial organ in France.

The rebellion of the Catholic League, which culminated in the revolt of Paris and other parts of France, was not only motivated by concern over the possible imposition of a minority Huguenot faith upon the Catholic French. Leaguer grievances were political and economic as well as religious. Henry III, the last Valois king, had imposed upon his country a huge amount of pillage, a very high tax burden, and large amounts of expense, offices and subsidies. Huge taxes were particularly levied upon the city of Paris.

But Father Clement's act, however heroic, proved in the end to be counter productive. For the first Bourbon, Henry of Navarre, assumed the throne as Henry IV. Realizing that he could scarcely remain a Huguenot and still govern France, Henry, after four years of war, converted to Catholicism, supposedly explaining, in a probably apocryphal phrase, that 'Paris is worth a mass'. Henry IV had won. With the advent of the new Bourbon king came the rule of the centrist or 'moderate' Catholics, the *politiques* – 'the politicals'.

Whether one might call Henry IV and the *politiques* 'moderates' depends on one's perspective. As secularists and men of feeble faith, it is true that the *politiques* were not interested in slaughtering Huguenots, and were anxious to end the religious conflict as soon as possible. Henry did so in his toleration decree, the Edict of Nantes in 1598. In that sense, the *politiques* were 'middle-of-the-roaders' in between the two religious extremes: the Huguenots and the Catholic Leaguers. And that is the light that most historians have shed upon them. But in another important sense the *politiques* were not 'moderate' at all. For they were truly extreme in desiring to give all power to the absolute state and to its embodiment in the king of France. In triumphing over both 'extremes', Henry IV and the *politiques* rode roughshod over the only two groups who had called for resistance against royal tyranny. The victory of Henry also meant the end of French resistance to royal absolutism. Unchecked despotic rule by the Bourbons was now to be France's lot for two centuries, until it was brought to a violent end by the French Revolution. It was a high price indeed to pay for religious concord, especially since Louis XIV, the 'Sun King', the embodiment of French royal despotism, revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and thereby drove many Huguenots out of France. In the long run, the religious 'peace' of absolutist 'moderation' turned out to be the peace of the grave for many Huguenots.

5.12 Notes

1. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol. II, The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 143. In particular, two late sixteenth century works launched this critique: the Italian Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1534–1611), *A Judgment on the Writings of Jean Bodin, Philippe Mornay and Niccolo Machiavelli* (Lyons, 1594); and the Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527–1611), *Religion and the Virtues of the Christian Prince against Machiavelli* (Madrid, 1595, trans. and ed. by George A. Moore, Maryland, 1949).
2. Gary North, 'The Economic Thought of Luther and Calvin', *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, II (Summer, 1975), p. 77.
3. Richard H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1927, New York: New American Library, 1954), p. 80.
4. Ibid., p. 95.
5. In contrast to the Catholics, to Luther, and probably to Calvin (who, however, was ambivalent on the subject), the Puritans were 'post-millennialist', i.e. they believed that human beings would have to establish the Kingdom of God on earth for a thousand years before Christ would return. The others were either 'pre-millennialist' (Christ would return to earth and *then* set up a thousand years of the Kingdom of God on earth), or, like the Catholics, amillennialist (Christ would return period, and then the world would end). Post-millennialism, of course, tended to induce in its believers eagerness and even haste to get on with their own establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth so that Jesus could eventually return.
6. The fact that only late Calvinism developed this version of the calling indicates that Weber might have had his causal theory reversed: that the growth of capitalism might have led to a more accommodating Calvinism rather than the other way round. Weber's approach holds up better in analysing those societies, such as China, where religious attitudes seem to have crippled capitalist economic development. Thus, see the analysis of

religion and economic development in China and Japan by the Weberian Norman Jacobs, *The Origin of Modern Capitalism and Eastern Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1958).

7. Emil Kauder, *A History of Marginal Utility Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.5.
8. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 216; see also pp. 206–26.
9. Kauder, op. cit., note 7, p. 9.
10. John T. Noonan, Jr, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 344*n*.
11. Ibid., p. 371.
12. Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, *Capital and Interest, Vol. I: History and Critique of Interest Theories* (1921, South Holland, Ill.: Libertarian Press, 1959), p. 24.
13. Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (1950, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 133.
14. Quoted in Igor Shafarevich, *The Socialist Phenomenon* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 57.
15. Carl Menger, *Principles of Economics* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), pp. 317–18.
16. Skinner, op. cit., note 1, p. 321.
17. Ibid., pp. 343–4.
18. Ibid., p. 347.

6 Absolutist thought in Italy and France

6.1 The emergence of absolutist thought in Italy

By the twelfth century, the Italian city-states had evolved a new form of government, new at least since ancient Greece. Instead of the usual hereditary monarch as feudal overlord, basing his rule on a network of feudal dominion over land areas, the Italian city-states became republics. The commercial oligarchs who constituted the ruling élite of the city-state would elect as ruler a salaried bureaucratic official or *podesta*, whose term of office was short, and who therefore ruled at the pleasure of the oligarchy. This city-republican form of government began at Pisa in 1085, and had swept northern Italy by the end of the twelfth century.

Since the age of Charlemagne in the ninth century, the German – or 'Holy Roman' – emperors were legally supposed to be rulers of northern Italy. For several centuries, however, this rule was merely *pro forma*, and the city-states were *de facto* independent. By the mid-twelfth century, the Italian city-states were the most prosperous countries in Europe. Prosperity meant the standing temptation of wealth to loot, and so the German emperors, beginning with Frederick Barbarossa in 1154, began a two-centuries-long series of attempts to conquer the northern Italian cities. The incursions came to an end with the resounding defeat of Emperor Henry VII's expedition of 1310–13, followed by the abject withdrawal and dissolution of the imperial army of Louis of Bavaria in 1327.

In the course of this chronic struggle, legal and political theorists arose in Italy to give voice to an eventually successful Italian determination to resist the encroachment of the German monarchs. They evolved the idea of the right of nations to resist imperial attempts at conquest by other states – what would later be called the right of national independence, or 'self-government' or 'national self-determination'.

During the two centuries of conflict, the major ally of the Italian city-states against the German empire was the pope, who in that era was able to put papal armies into the field. As the papal armies helped the cities roll back the emperor's forces during the thirteenth century, the city-states found to their growing chagrin that the pope was beginning to assert temporal power over northern Italy. And those claims could be backed up by the papal armies occupying large sections of the Italian peninsula.

For a while, some theorists toyed with the idea of reversing Italian policy and submitting to the German emperor in order to rid themselves of the papal threat. Prominent among this group was the great Florentine poet Dante Alighieri, who advanced his pro-imperial and anti-papal views in his *Monarchy*, written at the height of the imperial hopes for the 1310 expedition of Henry VII. The end of the imperial threat soon afterwards, however, made this turn to the emperor impractical, as well as unpalatable to the majority of Italians. And so a new political theory was needed by the oligarchs of the

Italian city-states. Such a theory would assert the claims of the secular state – whether republic or monarchy made little difference – to rule at will, unchecked by the age-old moral and often concrete authority of the Catholic Church to limit state invasions of natural law and human rights. In short, the Italian oligarchs needed a theory of state absolutism, of secular power untrammelled. The Church was to be impatiently relegated to the purely theological and 'religious' area while secular affairs would be in the entirely separate hands of the state and its temporal power. This amounted to the *politique* doctrine, as it would come to prevail in late sixteenth century France.

As we have seen above, the Italian oligarchs found their new theory in the writings of the political theorist and university professor, Marsiglio of Padua. Marsiglio can therefore be considered the first absolutist in the modern western world, and his *Defensor Pacis* (1324) the first main expression of absolutism.

While Marsiglio was the founding theorist of absolutism in the West, the specific form of his own cherished polity quickly became obsolete – at least in Padua. For Marsiglio was an adherent of oligarchical republicanism, but this form of government proved short-lived, and disappeared in Padua soon after the publication of his treatise. During the latter half of the thirteenth century, the Italian city-states became riven between the old oligarchs – the *magnati* – striving to retain their power, and the newly wealthy but disenfranchised *popolani*, who kept attempting to gain power. The upshot was that throughout northern Italy during the last half of the thirteenth century – beginning with Ferrara in 1264 – power was seized by one man, one *signor*, one despot who imposed the hereditary rule of himself and his family. In effect, hereditary monarchy had been established once again. They were not called 'kings', since that would have been an absurdly grandiose title for the territory of one city; and so they gave themselves other names: 'permanent lord'; 'captain general'; 'duke', etc. Florence was one of the few cities able to resist the new tide of one-man rule.

In 1328, four years after the publication of *Defensor Pacis*, the della Scala family finally managed to impose their control over the city of Padua. The della Scalas had taken over Verona in the 1260s, and now, after many years of conflict, Cangrande della Scala was able to seize power in Padua as well. Quick to inaugurate a new tradition of fawning adulation of tyranny was the prominent Paduan literary figure Ferreto de Ferreti (c.1296–1337), who abandoned his previous republicanism to compose a long Latin poem on *The Rise of the della Scala.*

The hero Cangrande had come, according to Ferreti, and brought peace and stability at last to 'turbulent' and torn Padua. Ferreti concluded his panegyric by expressing the fervent hope that the descendants of Cangrande della Scala would 'continue to hold their sceptres for long years to come'.

6.2 Italian humanism: the republicans

The defenders of the old oligarchic republics countered the rise of the *signori* with a pro-republican absolutism of their own. This development began in the teaching of rhetoric. By the early twelfth century, the University of Bologna, and other Italian centres for training lawyers, had developed courses in rhetoric, originally the art and style of writing letters, to which was later added the art of public speaking. By the first half of the thirteenth century, the professors of rhetoric were including direct political commentary in their lessons and handbooks. One popular form was a propagandistic history of their particular cities, glorifying the city and its rulers, and expressly devoted to inculcating the ideology of support for the ruling élite of the city. The most prominent early master of this genre was the Bolognese rhetorician Boncampagno da Signa (c.1165–1240), whose most popular work was *The Siege of Ancona* (1201–2). Another prominent form, developed by Italian rhetoricians in the second half of the thirteenth century, was advice-books for rulers and city magistrates, in which political advice was directed to the rulers. The most important early advice-book was John of Viterbo's *The Government of Cities*, which he wrote in the 1240s after serving as a judge under the elected ruler, or *podesta* of Florence. John of Viterbo, however, was not a full absolutist, since his determinedly moral approach counselled the ruler always to pursue virtue and justice and to avoid vice and crime.

Whereas the Italian teaching of rhetoric at Bologna and elsewhere was narrowly practical, the French professors of rhetoric in the thirteenth century upheld the classical Greek and Roman writers as models of style. The French method was taught at the University of Paris and particularly at Orleans. By the second half of the thirteenth century, Italian rhetoricians who had studied in France brought the new approach to Italy, and the broader, more humanistic approach quickly swept the field, dominating even the University of Bologna. Soon these early humanists began to study the ideas as well as the style of the classical poets, historians and orators, and began to enliven their political theory with classical references and models.

The most important of these early humanist rhetoricians was the Florentine Brunetto Latini (c.1220–94). Exiled from his native Florence, Latini went to France at the age of 40 and imbibed the works of Cicero and the French rhetorical approach. During his exile, Latini composed his leading work, *The Books of Treasure*, which introduced Cicero and other classical writers into the traditional works of Italian rhetoric. On his return to Florence in 1266, Latini also translated and published some of Cicero's major works.

Particularly important in the new learning was the University of Padua, beginning with the great judge Lovato Lovati (1241–1309), whom no less a poet than Petrarch (mid-fourteenth century) called the greatest Italian poet up to that time. The most important of Lovati's disciples was the fascinating

character Alberto Mussato (1261–1329). Lawyer, politician, historian, dramatist and poet, Mussato was the leader of the republican faction in Padua, the main opposition to the lengthy campaign by the della Scala family to seize power in that city. (Ironically enough, Ferreto de Ferreti, the panegyrist of the della Scala victory, had been a fellow disciple in the Lovati circle.) Mussato wrote two histories of Italy; his most prominent literary effort was the notable Latin verse play *Ecerinis* (1313–14), the first secular drama written since the classical era. Here Mussato employed the new rhetoric as politician and propagandist. He explains in the introduction to the play that his chief purpose was to 'inveigh with lamentations against tyranny', specifically of course the tyranny of the della Scalas. The political propaganda value of *Ecerinis* was quickly recognized by the Paduan oligarchy, which crowned Mussato with a laurel wreath in 1315, and issued a decree ordering the play to be read aloud each year before the assembled populace of the city.

The new study of the classics also gave rise to sophisticated city chronicles, such as the *Chronicle* of Florence written in the early fourteenth century by Dino Compagni (c.1255–1324), a prominent lawyer and politician of the city. Indeed, Compagni was himself one of the rulers of the Florentine oligarchy. Another important example of republican rhetorical humanism was Bonvesin della Riva's book, *The Glories of the City of Milan* (1288). Bonvesin was a leading professor of rhetoric in Milan.

All these writers – Latini, Mussato, Compagni, and others – were concerned to work out a political theory in defence of oligarchical republican rule. They concluded that there are two basic reasons for the rise of the hated *signori*: the emergence of factions within the city, and love of greed and luxury. Both sets of ills were of course an implicit attack on the rise of the *nouveau riche popolani* and the challenge of the *popolani* against the old republican magnates. Without the new wealth of the *popolani* or the rise of their factions, the old oligarchy would have gone on their way undisturbed in the quiet exercise of power. Compagni put it baldly: Florence was disrupted because 'the minds of the false popolani' had been 'corrupted to do wrong for the sake of gain'. Latini sees the source of evil in 'those who covet riches', and Mussato attributes the death of the Paduan republic to 'the lust for money' which undermined civic responsibility. Note the emphasis on the 'lust' or 'coveting' of money, that is, by *new* wealth; *old* and therefore 'good' wealth – that of the magnates – does not require lust or coveting since it is already in the possession of the oligarchy.

The way to end factions, according to the humanists, was for the people to put aside personal interests for unity on behalf of the 'public' or civic 'interest', of the 'common good'. Latini set the tone by bringing in Plato and Aristotle, Plato for instructing us that 'we ought to consider the common profit above everything else', and Aristotle for stressing that 'if each man

follows his own individual will, the government of men's lives is destroyed and totally dissolved'.

Blather about the 'public interest' and the 'common good' may be all very well, until the time comes to interpret in practice what these cloudy concepts are supposed to mean and in particular *who* is supposed to interpret their meaning. To the humanists the answer is clear: the virtuous ruler. Select virtuous rulers, trust in their virtue, and the problem is solved.

How are the people supposed to go about selecting virtuous rulers? That was not the sort of embarrassing question posed or considered by the Italian humanists. For that would have led ineluctably to considering *institutional mechanisms* which might promote the selection of virtuous rulers, or worse yet, prevent the selection of the vicious. Any such tampering with institutions would have led to checks on the absolute power of rulers, and that was not the mind-set of these humanist apologists for the sovereign power of oligarchy.

The humanists were clear, however, that virtue inheres in the individuals and not in noble families *per se*. While it was surely sensible of them to avoid centring virtue in hereditary noble families, it also meant that the virtuous ruler could personally reign unchecked by any traditional family ties or commitments.

The only check offered to ensure the virtue of rulers, the only real criterion for such virtue, was if the rulers followed the advice of these humanists, as elaborated in their advice-books. Happily, while Latini and his humanist followers established all the preconditions for absolute rule, they did not proceed to endorse absolutism itself. For, like John of Viterbo before them, they insisted that the ruler must be truly virtuous, including cleaving to honesty and the pursuit of justice. Like John of Viterbo and others in what has been called the 'mirror-of-princes' literature, Latini and his followers insisted that the ruler must avoid all temptations to fraud and dishonesty, and that he serve as a model of integrity. To Latini and the others, true virtue and the self-interest of the ruler were one and the same. Honesty was not only morally correct, it was also, in a later phrase, 'the best policy'. Justice, probity, being loved by his subjects rather than being feared – all would also serve to maintain the ruler in power. *Seeming* to be just and honest, Latini made clear, was not enough; the ruler, both for the sake of virtue and for keeping his power, 'must actually be as he wishes to seem', for he will be 'grossly deceived' if 'he tries to gain glory by false methods...' There was, in short, no conflict between morality and utility for the ruler; the ethical turned out, harmoniously, to be the useful.

The next great burst of Italian humanism came in the city of Florence, nearly a century later. The independence of Florence, the stronghold of oligarchic republicanism, was threatened, for three-quarters of a century,

from the 1380s to the 1450s, by the Visconti family of Milan. Giangeleazzo Visconti, *signor* and duke of Milan, set out in the 1380s to reduce all northern Italy to his subjection. By 1402, Visconti had conquered all northern Italy except Florence, and that city was saved by the sudden death of the duke. Soon, however, Giangeleazzo's son, Duke Filippo Maria Visconti, launched the war of conquest again. All-out war between Florence and imperial Milan continued from 1423 until 1454, when Florence induced Milan to recognize the independence of the Florentine republic.

The embattled status of the Florentine republic led to a revival of republican humanism. While these early fifteenth century Florentine humanists were more philosophically oriented and more optimistic then their early fourteenth century Paduan and other Italian predecessors, their political theory was very much the same. All these leading Florentine humanists (much better known to later historians than the earlier Paduans) had similar biographies: they were trained as lawyers and rhetoricians, and they became either professors of rhetoric and/or top bureaucrats in Florence, in other cities, or at the papal court at the Vatican. Thus the *doyen* of the Florentine humanists was Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), who studied rhetoric at Bologna and became chancellor at various Italian cities, in the last three decades of his life at Florence. Of Salutati's main disciples, Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444) studied law and rhetoric in Florence, became secretary at the papal curia, and then became a top bureaucrat and finally chancellor of Florence from 1427 until his death. Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370–1444) began training in law in Florence and then rose to secretary at the papal curia; and similarly Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) studied civil law at Bologna and Florence and then became a professor of rhetoric at the papal curia.

The second generation of the Salutati circle also followed similar careers and had kindred views. Here should be mentioned the distinguished architect Leon Battista degli Alberti (1404–72) of the great banking family, who earned a doctorate in canon law at Bologna and then became a papal secretary; Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459) was educated in law and humanistic studies in Florence, and then served for two decades in the Florentine bureaucracy, later becoming secretary at the papal curia and finally secretary to the king of Naples; and Matteo Palmieri (1406–75) became a top bureaucrat for five decades in Florence, including eight different ambassadorships.

6.3 Italian humanism: the monarchists

The political and economic decline of the Italian city-states after the turn to the Atlantic in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was marked in foreign affairs by the repeated invasions of Italy by armies of the burgeoning nation-states of Europe. The French kings invaded and conquered Italy repeatedly from the 1490s on, and from the early 1520s to the 1550s the armies

of France and the Holy Roman Empire fought over Italy as a battleground for conquest.

While Florence and the remainder of northern Italy were being invaded from without, republicanism throughout Italy finally gave way to despotic one-man rule of the various *signori*. Whereas republican forces, headed by the Colonna family, had managed to deprive the popes of their temporal power during the mid-fifteenth century, by the end of that century the popes, led by Alexander VI (1492–1503) and Julius II (1503–13) managed to reassert themselves as unchallenged temporal monarchs over Rome and the papal states. In Florence, the powerful de Medici family of bankers and politicians began slowly but surely to build up their political power until they could become hereditary monarchs, *signori*. The process began as early as the 1430s with the great Cosimo de Medici, and culminated in the seizure of power in 1480 by Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo 'the Magnificent'. Lorenzo ensured his one-man rule by setting up a 'council of seventy' with complete control over the republic, all comprising his own supporters.

The republican forces fought back, however, and the struggle lasted another half-century. In 1494, the republican oligarchs forced Lorenzo's son Piero into exile after he had surrendered Florence to the French. Republican rule collapsed in 1512, when the Medici took command with the aid of Spanish troops. Medici power then reigned until 1527, when another republican revolution drove them out; but two years later the Medici pope, Clement VII, induced the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to invade and conquer Florence on the Medici's behalf. Charles did so in 1530, and the Florentine republic was no more. Clement VII, left in charge of Florence by the emperor, appointed Alessandro de Medici ruler of the city for life, and Alessandro and all his heirs were also named lords of the city in perpetuity. The government of Florence dissolved into the Medici Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the Medicis ran Tuscany as monarchs for two more centuries.

The final triumph of the *signori* put an end to the optimism of the early fifteenth century republican humanists, whose successors began to grow cynical about politics and to advocate lives of quiet contemplation.

Other humanists, however, seeing on which side their bread was buttered, executed a quick shift from praising republican oligarchy to lauding one-man monarchy. We have already seen Ferreto Ferreti's swiftness in composing a panegyric to the della Scala tyranny in Padua. Similarly, around 1400, the peripatetic and usually republican P.P. Vergerio, during his stay in monarchical Padua, composed a work *On Monarchy*, in which he hailed that system as 'the best form of government'. Monarchy, after all, ended tumult and the ceaseless conflict of factions and parties; it brought peace, 'safety, security and the defence of innocence'. Also, with the victory of Visconti absolutism in Milan, the Milanese humanists quickly fell into line, composing panegyr-

ics to the glory of princely, and especially of Visconti, rule. Thus Uberto Decembrio (c.1350–1427) dedicated four books on local government to Filippo Maria Visconti in the 1420s, while his son Pier Candido Decembrio (1392–1477), keeping up the family tradition, wrote a *Eulogy in Praise of the City of Milan* in 1436.

With the triumph of the rule of the *signori* throughout Italy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, pro-princely humanism reached a peak of enthusiasm. The humanists proved to be nothing if not flexible in adjusting their theories to adapt from republican to princely rule. The humanists started turning out two kinds of advice-books: to the prince, and to the courtier, on how he should conduct himself toward that prince.

By far the most celebrated advice-book for courtiers was *The Book of the Courtier* (*Il libro del Cortegiano*), by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529). Born in a village near Mantua, Castiglione was educated at Milan and entered the service of the duke of that city. In 1504, he became attached to the court of the duke of Urbino, which he served faithfully as diplomat and military commander for two decades. Then, in 1524, Castiglione was passed over to the Emperor Charles V in Spain, and for his services, Charles made him bishop of Avila. Castiglione composed the *Book of the Courtier* as a series of dialogues between 1513 and 1518, and the book was first published in 1528 in Venice. The work became one of the most widely read books in the sixteenth century (known to Italians as *Il libro d'oro*), clearly touching a nerve in the culture of that epoch in its description and celebration of the qualities of the perfect courtier and gentleman.

The Florentine humanists of the early fifteenth century had been optimistic for man, for his quest for *virtus* (or *virtú*) or excellence, and for the 'honour, praise, and glory' which more traditional Christians had thought due only to God. It was therefore easy for the later, sixteenth century humanists to transfer that quest for excellence and glory from individual man to being the sole function of the prince. Thus Castiglione declares that the courtier's chief goal, 'the end to which he is directed', must be to advise his prince so that the latter may attain 'the pinnacle of glory' and make himself 'famous and illustrious in the world'.

The earlier republican humanists had nurtured the ideal of 'liberty', by which they meant, not the modern concept of individual rights, but republican, generally oligarchial, 'self-government'. Castiglione expressly condemns such old notions, on behalf of the monarchical virtues of peace, absence of discord, and total obedience to the absolute prince. In *The Book of the Courtier*, one of the characters in the dialogue protests that princes 'hold their subjects in the closest bondage' so that liberty is gone. Castiglione shrewdly counters, in age-old terms used in numerous apologia for despotism, that such liberty is only a plea that we be allowed to 'live as we like' rather than

'according to good laws'. Since liberty is only licence, then, a monarch is needed to 'establish his people in such laws and ordinances that they may live in ease and peace'.

A leading writer of advice-books to both the prince and the courtier, and a man who bears the dubious distinction of being perhaps the first mercantilist, was the Neapolitan duke, Diomede Carafa (1407–87). Carafa wrote *The Perfect Courtier* while serving at the court of Ferdinand, king of Naples, in the 1480s, as well as *The Office of a Good Prince* during the same period. In *The Perfect Courtier*, Carafa set the tone for Castiglione's enormously influential work a generation later. In his *Office of a Good Prince*, Carafa set the model for the form of economic advice presented by consultant administrators. As in many later works, the book begins with principles of general policy and defence, then goes on to administration of justice, to public finance, and finally economic policy proper.

In detailed policies, Carafa's advice is relatively sensible, and not nearly as totally power-oriented or as statist as later mercantilists advising fully fledged nation-states. The budget should be balanced, since forced loans are comparable to robbery and theft, and taxes should be equitable and moderate in order not to oppress labour or drive capital from the country. Business should be left alone but, on the other hand, Carafa called for subsidies of industry, agriculture, and commerce by the state, as well as substantial welfare expenditures. In contrast to the later mercantilists, foreign merchants, declared Carafa, should be made welcome because their activities are highly useful to the country.

But there is no hint in Carafa, in contrast to the scholastics, of any desire to understand or analyse market processes. The only important question was how the ruler can manipulate them. As Schumpeter wrote of Carafa: 'The normal processes of economic life harbored no problem for Carafa. The only problem was how to manage and improve them'.

Schumpeter also attributes to Carafa the first conception of a national economy, of the entire country as one large business unit managed by the prince. Carafa was,

> so far as I know, the first to deal comprehensively with the economic problems of the nascent modern state....the fundamental idea that Carafa clothed in his conception of the Good Prince...of a National Economy...[which] is not simply the sum total of the individual households and firms or of the groups and classes within the borders of a state. It is conceived as a sort of sublimated business unit, something that has a distinct existence and distinct interests of its own and needs to be managed like a big farm.[1]

Perhaps the leading work among the new *genre* of advice-books to princes was that of Francesco Patrizi (1412–94), in his *The Kingdom and the Educa-*