

EPILOGUE

IN THIS BOOK, EVEN more than my previous books, I have introduced or reintroduced the reader to numerous consequential thinkers in an effort to rekindle a love for the legacy and principles that define Americanism and a comprehension of the perils the nation faces. Much territory has been covered—philosophy, history, economics, government, and culture—making an abbreviated restatement of the previous pages impossible.

Suffice to say that America's founding principles are eternal principles. They are principles that instruct humanity today and tomorrow, as they did yesterday. These principles are born of intuition, faith, experience, and right reason. They are the foundation on which the civil society is built and the

individual is cherished; they are the basis of freedom, moral order, happiness, and prosperity.

Yet these principles are apparently so grievous and abhorrent that they are mostly ignored or even ridiculed today by academia, the media, and politicians—that is, the ruling elite and its surrogates. They reject history's lessons and instead are absorbed with their own conceit and aggrandizement in the relentless pursuit of a diabolical project, the final outcome of which is an oppression of mind and soul. Indeed, our ears are pierced with the shrill and constant chorus of promises and shibboleths about utopian statism, which, of course, serve the purposes of a sterile, scientific project and its centralized administrative-state masterminds. The equality they envision, but dare not honestly proclaim, is life on the hamster wheel, where one individual is indistinguishable from the next.

In many respects, the progressive has succeeded in his primary objective: the deconstruction of the American republic for concentrated, centralized power—the exact opposite of the Founders' intentions. During the last century or so, America began the transformation into a kind of pseudo-constitutional or post-constitutional republic, in which the natural law truths of the Declaration of Independence and the justice and security of the Constitution are typically and repeatedly abused to, paradoxically, enshrine in law and justify as legitimate the progressive's autocratic and egalitarian agenda. This is not to say that every aspect of republicanism and constitutionalism has been uprooted or eclipsed. But manipulating and breach-

ing the Constitution—by the courts, the elected branches, and the administrative state, and through the federal government’s growing aggressiveness in controlling and coercing the individual—has become increasingly routine and commonplace. Moreover, such transgressions are mostly acquiesced to, or worse, celebrated by too many. And for those who take notice, there seem to be few remaining and effective avenues of recourse.

In his pamphlet (later book) *The Law* (1850), French economist and statesman Frédéric Bastiat (1801–1850) explained that the perversion of the law is the perversion of justice—justice being a primary purpose of the civil society. “[W]hen [the law] has exceeded its proper functions, it has not done so merely in some inconsequential and debatable matters. The law has gone further than this; it has acted in direct opposition to its own purpose. The law has been used to destroy its own objective: It has been applied to annihilating the justice that it was supposed to maintain; to limiting and destroying rights which its real purpose was to respect. The law has placed the collective force at the disposal of the unscrupulous who wish, without risk, to exploit the person, liberty, and property of others. It has converted plunder into a right, in order to protect plunder. And it has converted lawful defense into a crime, in order to punish lawful defense.”¹

As a consequence, and despite the democratic features of a republic, Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America* that the outcome is soft tyranny. Indeed, as if condemning modern pro-

gressives and the future administrative state, Tocqueville explained: “When the sovereign is elective, or narrowly watched by a legislature which is really elective and independent, the oppression that he exercises over individuals is sometimes greater, but it is always less degrading; because every man, when he is oppressed and disarmed, may still imagine that, while he yields obedience, it is to himself he yields it, and that it is to one of his own inclinations that all the rest give way. In like manner, I can understand that when the sovereign represents the nation and is dependent upon the people, the rights and the power of which every citizen is deprived serve not only the head of the state, but the state itself; and that private persons derive some return from the sacrifice of their independence which they have made to the public. To create a representation of the people in every centralized country is, therefore, to diminish the evil that extreme centralization may produce, but not get rid of it.”²

Yes, not get rid of it, not completely. And from the seeds of this tyranny sprouts tyranny itself. Lest we forget: It is one thing for the individual to be all he can be, but it is quite another thing for the government to be all it can be. The former was born to be free; the latter was established with limits. Tocqueville observed that there is no end to the tinkering and bullying of a boundless government. Nothing is off-limits, not even the small events and details of life, leaving the spirit of democratic vibrancy and its popular allure gravely weakened. Tocqueville’s warning bears repeating: “Subjection in minor

affairs breaks out every day and is felt by the whole community indiscriminately. It does not drive men to resistance, but it crosses them at every turn, till they are led to surrender the exercise of their own will. Thus their spirit is gradually broken and their character enervated; whereas that obedience which is exacted on a few important but rare occasions only exhibits servitude at certain intervals and throws the burden of it upon a small number of men. It is in vain to summon a people who have been rendered so dependent on the central power to choose from time to time the representatives of that power; this rare and brief exercise of their free choice, however important it may be, will not prevent them from gradually losing the faculties of thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves, and thus gradually falling below the level of humanity.”³

Once the individual’s spirit is conquered in favor of proclaimed egalitarian ends, Tocqueville pointed out, “[t]he hatred that men bear to privilege increases in proportion as privileges become fewer and less considerable, so that democratic passions would seem to burn most fiercely just when they have least fuel. . . . When all conditions are unequal, no inequality is so great as to offend the eye, whereas the slightest dissimilarity is odious in the midst of general uniformity; the more complete this uniformity is, the more insupportable the sight of such a difference becomes. Hence it is natural that the love of equality should constantly increase together with the equality itself, and that it should grow by what it feeds on.”⁴ In other words, once the poison of jealousy, contempt,

and even hatred enters the bloodstream of the body politic, a dark and foreboding bleakness will begin to cover the society, from which nothing good will come.

I confess that I often wonder what America will have become in fifty or one hundred years. What will the future hold for our children and grandchildren? Will they be free, happy, prosperous, independent, and secure? What will be left of our constitutional system? Will the Bill of Rights have the force of law? What about property rights? Will they matter? How many will remember or care to learn about our founding principles, as concisely and brilliantly set forth in the Declaration of Independence? How many remember or care today? What of the civil society—or the social compact? Will it have frayed beyond repair? Will we have been conquered from within, as Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Story, and Abraham Lincoln feared might be our fate? Will we have avoided the doom of Athens and Rome? If we are honest with ourselves, we must agree that the outcome is unclear. The reason: a century or so of progressive governance and schemes, targeting the uniqueness of America, including its founding principles and republican system.

Future generations will look back on what we have done and know the answers. They will draw their judgments about this generation and record them in their history books. What lessons will they have learned? What will they say about us?

Will they say that we were a wise and conscientious people who understood and appreciated the blessings of our existence and surroundings and prudentially and conscientiously cared for them; or will they say we were a self-indulgent and inattentive people, easily shepherded in one direction or another, who stole the future from our own children and generations yet born, and squandered an irreplaceable heritage?

I am frequently asked what can be done. I have attempted to provide some specific answers. In *Liberty and Tyranny*, I presented a manifesto of policies and actions that I believed would contribute to improving our society, if the political will for such plans could be mustered. Unfortunately, at this writing, despite Republican Party control of all the elected branches of the federal government and historic control of state legislatures and governorships, it seems most of the objectives will remain inert. In *The Liberty Amendments*, I argued for using Article V of the Constitution to bring together a convention of the states, the purpose of which is to bypass the federal Leviathan altogether and enable the states to consider constitutional avenues for restoring republican government. Indeed, I suggested eleven reform amendments that, if adopted, would go a long way toward returning the federal government to its intended place. While there has been a valorous grassroots effort, even many Republican state legislatures have rejected this vital constitutional plan. In *Plunder and Deceit*, I endeavored to highlight the extent to which the federal government is dragging and pushing the nation toward the abyss by fo-

cusing on the economic and financial calamity of unfettered spending and borrowing. Again, little amelioration of consequence appears either around the corner or in the offing.

Nonetheless, those of us whose eyes are open, whatever our numbers, have a moral obligation to try to rouse our fellow citizens to take a sober and critical look at the decaying societal conditions, from which truthful conclusions can be drawn and perhaps improvements made. I understand the daunting task, given the powerful tide against which we must swim and the condemnations and mockeries from those who fear such inquiries and wish to escape them. Yet there is neither virtue nor benefit in denial or self-censorship.

There is no possible escape from reality. And we can gain strength from our own history and the courage and wisdom of the Founding Fathers and so many others who came before us.

Besides, we have no choice.