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# Athwart history, yelling stop [1]

Written by **Philip Salter** [2] | Sunday 2 March 2008

From his first publication in which he lambasted Yale, his alma mater, for its opposition to religion and capitalism, William F Buckley Jr. set his course as deeply intellectual, confrontational iconoclast. Through National Review he defined US conservatism. This reinvention marginalised the less palatable positions of the right, not least its anti-semitism, advancing the free market economics that became the hallmark of Ronald Reagan?s presidecy. As such Reagan had much respect for Buckley, rhetorizing of him:

*?You didn?t just part the Red Sea ? you rolled it back, dried it up and left exposed, for all the world to see, the naked desert that is statism?.*

In his later years Buckley participated less in the public life that he had so long served; at the same time the right has missed the eloquence of his firey, thoughtful conservatism which has too often been replaced with negative, backward-looking socially conservative elements. It is a shame to see the right that the likes of Buckley eclipsed, working their way back into the mainstream of political thought.

Buckley offered the inspirational convergence of a serious engagement with high ideas, joie de vivre and an honest pragmatism. It is a model that conservatism across both sides of the Atlantic should follow. It is certainly not the road most often taken, but it makes all the difference.

As the Wall Street Journal [3] put it:

*?Bill Buckley lived a great American life. His heroism was very American--the individualist at work in the world, the defender of great creeds and great beliefs going forth with spirit, style and joy?.*

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