

## [Athwart history, yelling stop](#) [1]

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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 presidency. 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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