

# FIRST PRINCIPLES

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS TO GUIDE POLITICS AND POLICY

## MAKERS OF AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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### William F. Buckley Jr.: Conservative Icon

Lee Edwards



William F. Buckley Jr. was the renaissance man of modern American conservatism. He was the founder and editor in chief of *National Review*, a syndicated columnist, the host of *Firing Line* (TV's longest-running weekly public-affairs program), the author of more than 50 books, and a college lecturer for nearly five decades. His mighty stream of words is almost surely unequalled by any other writer of the past 100 years.

Before Bill Buckley came along, American conservatism was composed of “a congeries of ill assorted half-enemies,” in the words of long-time *National Review* publisher Bill Rusher.<sup>1</sup> Buckley purged the conservative movement of its extremist

elements and united the rest by persuading traditionalists, libertarians, and anti-Communists to focus on a common enemy: liberalism.

Buckley's vision of ordered liberty shaped and guided modern conservatism from its infancy in the 1950s to its present-day maturity as a political force that has transformed American politics. As George Will has written, “Before there was Ronald Reagan, there was Barry Goldwater, and before there was Barry Goldwater, there was *National Review*, and before there was *National Review*, there was Bill Buckley with a spark in his mind, and the spark in 1980 became a conflagration.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Early Life

William Frank Buckley Jr. was born in New York City on November 24, 1925, the sixth of the 10 children of William F. Buckley Sr., a strong-willed Texas oilman and Irish Catholic, and Aloise Steiner Buckley, the devoutly Catholic daughter of a successful New Orleans businessman.

Disdaining public education for his children, Will Buckley set up a

private school at Great Elm, the family home in Sharon, Connecticut, and employed a small army of private tutors. There was instruction in apologetics, art, calligraphy, piano, speech, and typing—a deliberate combination of the classical and the practical. There were tutors in French, Latin, Spanish, and English. There were two full-time teachers, tests, grades, class hours, and requirements for graduation.

There were also five pianos and one organ in the house. “It was never absolutely clear,” Buckley later wrote, “whether the sound was worse when all the pianos were being exercised jointly or when only one of them was being played.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, Bill Buckley became an accomplished amateur harpsichordist, playing the occasional Bach concert.

When Buckley graduated from high school in 1943 at the head of his class, he was only 17 and not eligible for the draft. He spent a few months at the University of Mexico in Mexico City improving his Spanish before he was inducted into the army in July 1944. Buckley described his military service as “brief and bloodless,”<sup>4</sup>

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## Born

November 24, 1925, in New York City to William Frank Buckley Sr. and Aloise Josephine Antonia Steiner (Buckley).

## Education

Attended the National Autonomous University of Mexico for one year in 1943, graduated from the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School as a second lieutenant, and later graduated with honors from Yale with degrees in political science, history, and economics in 1950.

## Religion

Roman Catholic.

## Family

Married Patricia Aldyen Austin Taylor in 1950, with whom he had one son, Christopher Buckley.

## Highlights

- Author of over 50 books, including *God and Man at Yale* (1951); *Up from Liberalism* (1959); *Saving the Queen: A Blackford Oakes Novel* (1976); *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith* (1997); *Miles Gone By: A Literary Autobiography* (2004); and *The Reagan I Knew* (2008).
- Founding president, Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (1953).
- Founder and editor in chief, *National Review* (1955–1990).
- Co-founder, Conservative Party of New York (1961).
- Mayoral candidate, New York City (1965).
- Public delegate to the United Nations (1973).
- Host, *Firing Line* (1966–1999).
- Syndicated columnist (1962–2008).

## Died

February 27, 2008, at his home in Stamford, Connecticut.

## Notable Quote

“I would rather be governed by the first 2,000 people in the Boston telephone directory than by the 2,000 people on the faculty of Harvard University.”

but it was also a rite of passage for the outspoken young conservative. He learned to get along better with the men around him, writing to his father: “I learned the importance of tolerance and the importance of a sense of proportion about all matters—even in regard to religion, morality, etc.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1945, he enrolled at Yale University where he majored in economics and history, established himself as one of the best debaters in the university’s history, and was tapped by Skull and Bones, the prestigious secret society for seniors,

making him one of the biggest men on campus. As chairman (effectively editor) of the *Yale Daily News*, he turned a typical college paper filled with administration press releases into a lively must-read publication. He sent reporters to New York and Washington to cover national stories while he editorialized about Yale’s educational flaws, the dangers of Communism, the virtues of capitalism, and the many mistakes of President Harry Truman.

While at Yale, Bill Buckley met Patricia Taylor of Vancouver, Canada, who was beautiful, as sharp-witted

as Bill, and wealthier. After a brief period of courting, Bill flew to Vancouver for a weekend and asked Pat whether she would marry him. Bill and Pat, an Anglican, married in July 1950 at the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Vancouver and then were blessed by the Anglican bishop at their wedding reception. They would love, honor, and challenge each other for more than five decades until Pat Buckley’s death in April 2007.

The young couple settled in Hamden, Connecticut, a New Haven suburb, where Buckley taught

Spanish part-time at Yale while working on his first book, *God and Man at Yale*. It quickly became a bestseller and came under withering attack from Yale and mainstream newspapers and journals.

What had Buckley written that so enraged his alma mater and its establishment friends? He charged that Yale's values were agnostic as to religion, "interventionist" and Keynesian as to economics, and collectivist as regards the relationship of the individual to society and government. While conceding the validity of academic freedom for a professor's research, Buckley insisted that a professor did not have the right to inseminate into the minds of his students values that were counter to the values of the parents paying his salary. He urged parents, alumni, and trustees to resist this aberrant form of academic freedom.

Drawing upon his university experience, Buckley submitted that Yale had abandoned Christianity, free enterprise, and what he called "individualism." (He described himself in these early days as an "individualist" rather than as a conservative.) He said that the faculty members who favored atheism and socialism ought to be fired because the primary goal of education is to familiarize students with an existing body of truth, of which Christianity and free enterprise are the foundation. "Individualism

is dying at Yale," he declared, "and without a fight."<sup>6</sup>

### ***National Review*: Standing Athwart History**

At a moment when liberal critic Lionel Trilling's complaint that conservatism expressed itself only in "irritable mental gestures"<sup>7</sup> seemed painfully apt, William F. Buckley Jr. began the most far-reaching adventure of his life: the creation of a conservative journal that would challenge the liberal zeitgeist and, more than any other institution, mold a national movement that would significantly affect American politics starting in the 1960s and continuing to the present.

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#### **BUCKLEY'S VISION OF ORDERED LIBERTY SHAPED AND GUIDED MODERN CONSERVATISM FROM ITS INFANCY IN THE 1950S TO ITS PRESENT-DAY MATURITY AS A POLITICAL FORCE THAT HAS TRANSFORMED AMERICAN POLITICS.**

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Present at the creation of *National Review* were traditional conservatives Russell Kirk and Richard Weaver; libertarians John Chamberlain and Frank Chodorov; and—by far the largest group—anti-Communists who were also ex-Communists: James Burnham, Frank Meyer, Max Eastman, and Whittaker Chambers.

It was Bill Buckley's special genius as a fusionist that he was able to keep these philosophically dissimilar and personally disputatious writers on the same masthead for years to come. Why were there so few defectors? Because of Buckley's extraordinary skill at honoring and integrating the conflicting voices of the conservative choir and because one and all realized eventually that they were part of something historic and urgently needed—what Buckley would call "our movement."

In November 1955, when he launched *National Review*, Bill Buckley was in full right-wing mode: The first issue was defiantly conservative.

- The editors declared themselves to be "irrevocably" at war with "satanic" Communism: Victory, not accommodation, must be the goal.
- They were unapologetically "libertarian" in the battle against the growth of government.
- They announced themselves as "conservative" (that is, traditionalist) in the struggle between "the Social Engineers" who try to adjust mankind to scientific utopias and "the disciples of Truth" who defend the "organic moral order."<sup>8</sup>

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1. Lee Edwards interview with William A. Rusher, September 11, 2008.  
2. Quoted in John B. Judis, *William F. Buckley Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 14.  
3. William F. Buckley Jr., *Miles Gone By: A Literary Biography* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2004), p. 6.  
4. *Ibid.*, p. 115.  
5. Judis, *William F. Buckley Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives*, p. 50.  
6. William F. Buckley Jr., *God and Man at Yale* (Chicago: Regnery Publishing, 1951), p. 115.  
7. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1950), p. xv.  
8. William F. Buckley Jr., "Our Mission Statement," *National Review*, November 19, 1955, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/223549/our-mission-statement/william-f-buckley-jr#>.

Surveying the world, Buckley trenchantly wrote that *National Review* “stands athwart history, yelling Stop.”<sup>9</sup> But the magazine was not rigidly ideological. It made room for every strand of conservative thought: libertarians and Burkeans, free marketers and Southern Agrarians, Madisonians and European monarchists. “The only categories excluded were racists, anti-Semites, and ‘kooks.’”<sup>10</sup>

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**MUCH OF THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN CONSERVATISM AFTER 1955 IS THE HISTORY OF INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MAGAZINE THAT BILL BUCKLEY FOUNDED AND EDITED FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS.**

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The great majority of conservative intellectuals warmly welcomed the new journal on the block and lined up to write for it. *NR* became and remains to this day the most influential conservative magazine in America. George Nash wrote that if *National Review* had not been founded, “there would probably have been no cohesive intellectual force on the Right in the 1960s and 1970s.”<sup>11</sup> Much of the history of American conservatism after 1955 is the history of individuals associated with the magazine that Bill Buckley founded and edited for almost 40 years.

Buckley clearly had certain goals in mind for his magazine: Keep

the Republican Party, the primary political vehicle of conservatives, tilted to the right; eliminate any and all extremists from the conservative movement; flay and fleece the liberals at every opportunity; and push hard for a policy of victory over Communism in the Cold War.

One of his most significant public policy contributions to the modern conservative movement (and the Reagan presidency) was as an early champion of supply-side economics. Buckley hired a young economist, Alan Reynolds, making *NR* the first journal of public opinion to have a writer with a supply-side perspective on staff.

### **Conservative Politics**

Although Buckley insisted that *National Review* was founded not to make practical politics but to think and write, Buckley did not hesitate to involve himself in politics. In September 1960, he invited some 100 young conservative activists to gather at the family estate in Sharon, Connecticut, to found Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). YAF provided much of the manpower for Senator Barry Goldwater’s successful campaign to secure the 1964 presidential nomination.

Buckley’s most visible political adventure was the 1965 New York City mayoral race. In John O’Sullivan’s words, Buckley launched a serious bid for New York mayor

disguised as a lark. Asked at a news conference what he would do if he were elected, he replied with one of his most famous ripostes: “Demand a recount.”<sup>12</sup>

But his platform contained serious conservative proposals. He suggested that state and federal authorities suspend property and income taxes for all “Negro or Puerto Rican entrepreneurs” who established businesses in depressed areas in the inner city.<sup>13</sup> The proposal anticipated Heritage’s and Congressman Jack Kemp’s enterprise zone legislation a decade later. Years before Governor Reagan’s hard-nosed welfare-reform program in California, Buckley argued that all welfare recipients should be required to do cleanup and other work for the city. It was the first conservative articulation of the workfare principle.

Buckley lost the election, but his campaign so energized the Conservative Party of New York that five years later it elected Bill’s brother Jim to the U.S. Senate, where he set a high legislative standard. Buckley’s mayoral effort also sketched the outlines of a winning coalition of ethnic, Catholic Democrats and middle-class Republicans. In his landmark study *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips cited Buckley’s vote as a “harbinger” of a new majority.<sup>14</sup> It anticipated the northern urban coalition that Reagan forged in 1980 and 1984 and that enabled the California

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9. Ibid.

10. Linda Bridges and John R. Coyne Jr., *Strictly Right: William F. Buckley Jr. and the American Conservative Movement* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), p. 41.

11. George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), p. 233.

12. Sam Tanenhaus, “The Buckley Effect,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/02/magazine/02buckley.html?pagewanted=1&r=0>.

13. William F. Buckley Jr., “Mayor, Anyone?” *National Review*, June 6, 1965, <http://www.nationalreview.com/nroriginals/?q=MDBhOGE1Y2I4MTk4MDdhYzNiZDhkODQ1NTY5ODU3ZTc=#more>.

14. Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), p. 168.

conservative to carry liberal New York City in both elections.

### **Firing Line**

Running for mayor had another and more personal effect: It made Bill Buckley a national star in American politics, asked for his opinion on everything from the next President to the current cultural fad. His lively appearances on the *Tonight Show* starring Johnny Carson and other programs led to his becoming the host of his own weekly television public affairs program. *Firing Line* debuted in April 1966 and stayed on the air for the next 33 years, a TV record.

Television had never seen anything quite like it: Buckley verbally slicing and dicing liberal opponents like perennial Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas, anti-Vietnam War activist Staughton Lynd, and TV moderator David Susskind, whom Buckley introduced by saying, “If there were a contest for the title of Mr. Eleanor Roosevelt, he would unquestionably win it.”<sup>15</sup>

Not everyone was willing to match words with Buckley. Eager to have Senator Robert F. Kennedy as a guest, Buckley offered the late President’s brother a \$500 honorarium and a role in determining the format. Kennedy declined. Asked why he thought the New York Senator had turned him down, Buckley replied, “Why does baloney reject the grinder?”<sup>16</sup>

Out of the 1,500 programs and several thousand guests during the

decades of *Firing Line*, three central themes emerged: Communism, capitalism, and faith—the themes that mattered most to Buckley throughout his life.

### **Novelist and Writer**

Bill Buckley was first and foremost a writer and an Olympic-fast one, able to turn out a 700-word newspaper column in less than an hour and a new novel in about six weeks while vacationing in Switzerland. It was his book editor Samuel Vaughan who first suggested that Buckley—approaching 50—write a novel. His model was the popular spy novelist Frederick Forsyth, author of *The Day of the Jackal*.

His idea, he said, was to write “a book in which the good guys and the bad guys were actually distinguishable from one another. I took a deep breath and further resolved that the good guys would be—the Americans.”<sup>17</sup> He created the character of CIA operative Blackford Oakes: young, handsome, witty, “distinctively American.” Oakes was the hero of some 11 novels, most of which achieved best-seller status and one of which—*Stained Glass*—won the American Book Award in 1978 as the best suspense novel of the year.

Among his earlier nonfiction, *The Unmaking of a Mayor* stands out for its stylistic brilliance and narrative skill; it attracted a broad range of readers and made Bill Buckley a popular best-selling writer. Of his later works, *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith* was praised

as “a modern pilgrim’s progress” and a “deeply personal defense of his Catholic faith.”<sup>18</sup>

In all, Buckley wrote 55 works of fiction and nonfiction; 6,000 newspaper columns (totaling some 4.5 million words); hundreds of *National Review* editorials and obituaries (a Buckley specialty); magazine articles; introductions to the books of friends and colleagues; and letters, long and short, to thousands of people, many of whom he did not know but thought deserved a reply. His son Christopher has estimated that his father’s papers at Yale are 248.8 linear feet in length, higher than the spire of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York.

### **Building a Movement**

*National Review* was not just an exciting new journal: it was a political act. In a memorandum for investors, Buckley called the publication “a formative journal” that would “change the nation’s intellectual and political climate.”<sup>19</sup> The time was right, he said, for a magazine and, by implication, a movement that opposed the growth of government and those who counseled coexistence with Communism.

What does a political movement need to succeed? A coherent relevant philosophy, a national constituency, and charismatic principled leadership. The ongoing debate in the magazine provided a fusionist philosophy. Groups like Young Americans for Freedom and the Conservative Party of New York supplied the ground troops for political action,

15. Bridges and Coyne, *Strictly Right*, p. 96.

16. “The Sniper,” *Time*, November 3, 1967, p. 70.

17. Buckley, *Miles Gone By*, p. 344.

18. William J. Bennett, inside flap, and Charles W. Colson, back cover, William F. Buckley Jr., *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

19. Quoted in Alfred Regnery, *Upstream: The Ascendance of American Conservatism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), p. 63; emphasis added.



and Buckley's personal search for the right presidential candidate led him, after Goldwater's disappointing defeat and Richard Nixon's rejection of conservative ideas, to a nearly perfect conservative standard bearer.

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**WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. WAS THE ST. PAUL OF THE MODERN CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT, PROSELYTIZING TIRELESSLY ACROSS AMERICA, FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT AGAINST LIBERAL HERETICS, EXHORTING AND WARNING THE CONSERVATIVE FAITHFUL WHEN NECESSARY TO MEND THEIR WAYS**

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Wherever he was—sailing in New Guinea, skiing in Gstaad, writing in Wallacks Point—Bill Buckley kept his eye on the state of the conservative movement, most especially the political fortunes of Ronald Reagan. When Reagan ran for governor of California in 1966, *NR* enthusiastically endorsed his candidacy. By the early 1970s, Buckley was convinced that “Reagan was capable of becoming president.”<sup>20</sup> Following Vice President Spiro Agnew's exit in disgrace, the magazine dubbed Reagan the leader of conservatism.

In January 1978, two years before the presidential campaign would normally begin, Buckley in his syndicated column effectively endorsed the 66-year-old Ronald Reagan for President. He addressed the question of whether the former California governor was too old by recounting how Reagan had insisted on participating

in a touch football game the previous Thanksgiving at the Buckley estate and was “indistinguishable” in energy and skills from his 18-year-old son Ron Jr.

Reagan won the presidency in an electoral landslide and by more than 8 million popular votes. Columnist George Will identified the person most responsible (after the candidate) for the victory. Sixteen years earlier, he said, Barry Goldwater had made the Republican Party “a vessel of conservatism,” and *National Review* had filled that vessel with “an intellectually defensible modern conservatism.” The principal architect of that achievement was William F. Buckley, “the Pope of the conservative movement, operating out of a little Vatican on 35th Street.”<sup>21</sup>

It is a felicitous phrase, but I suggest a different metaphor. William F. Buckley Jr. was the St. Paul of the modern conservative movement, proselytizing tirelessly across America, fighting the good fight against liberal heretics, exhorting and warning the conservative faithful when necessary to mend their ways, knowing the race was not over even with the coming of the Reagan presidency.

In December 1985, *National Review* marked its 30th anniversary with a black-tie banquet in New York City that featured remarks by President Reagan. After detailing the advances of freedom around the world and the material role played by American conservatism, the President singled out *NR*. We are gathered, he said, to “celebrate 30

years of witty, civilized pages from our beloved *National Review* and the damage, the terminal damages, those pages have done to modern statism and its unrelenting grimness.”<sup>22</sup>

He saluted Buckley, “our clipboard-bearing Galahad,” “for setting loose so much good in the world. And, Bill,” he added, “thanks, too, for all the fun.”<sup>23</sup>

Bill Buckley had no intention of leaving the public square, but as he approached 65—when his father retired—he addressed the question of who should succeed him as editor of *National Review*, which he considered his most important and lasting contribution to the conservative movement and American politics. At the magazine's 35th anniversary in 1990, Buckley announced his retirement as editor in chief—after 1,014 issues—and turned over the helm to John O'Sullivan, a brilliant, witty Anglo-Irish editor who had run newspapers and journals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Buckley's notion of “retirement” was anyone else's full-time job. He remained on the *NR* masthead as editor at large and made it clear that he would let the new editor know if there was anything he strongly disliked. He stayed busy with the weekly *Firing Line* program, although he cut it from an hour to half an hour in length. He kept writing his syndicated column, although he reduced it from three times to twice a week. And he trimmed his lectures from 70 to 20 a year.

But he kept writing books on the average of one a year: novels about

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20. Judis, *William F. Buckley Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives*, p. 382.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 435.

22. Ronald Reagan, “The Defense of Freedom & Metaphysics of Fun: President Reagan Celebrates with *NR*,” December 5, 1985, <http://old.nationalreview.com/document/reagan200406100924.asp>.

23. *Ibid.*

Joe McCarthy and Elvis Presley, a history of the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall. In November 1991, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, from President George H. W. Bush, who said "the United States honors...a tireless worker in the vineyards of liberty."<sup>24</sup>

### Paying Back His Debt

Reagan speechwriter Peter Robinson recalls when he was doing research for Buckley on his latest book. "Bill," he said one day, "you were born wealthy and you've been famous for 30 years. Why do you keep working so hard?"

A surprised Buckley replied: "My father taught me that I owe it to my country. It's how I pay my debt."<sup>25</sup>

Until the end, he monitored the progress of the conservative movement, remarking in a November 2007 interview that the "conservative revolution" had peaked with Reagan's 1980 victory. Since then and even before, he said, conservatism seemed to have forgotten the libertarian message of Albert Jay Nock's *Our Enemy, the State*, "the consequences of which we have yet to pay for."<sup>26</sup>

It was a clear reference to the metastasizing of the federal government under President George W. Bush in domestic areas far removed from the war on terrorism. While it is not fair to say that "we have lost [the] war" against the welfare state, Buckley argued, "it is correct to say that it's a war that we need

to continue and concern ourselves with."<sup>27</sup>

In early February 2008, after more than 6,000 newspaper columns, he sat down before his personal computer in his cluttered garage-office at Wallacks Point and wrote his last one. The subject: the obligation, particularly if you are in public life, to use the right words.

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**WHILE IT IS NOT FAIR TO SAY THAT "WE HAVE LOST [THE] WAR" AGAINST THE WELFARE STATE, BUCKLEY ARGUED, "IT IS CORRECT TO SAY THAT IT'S A WAR THAT WE NEED TO CONTINUE AND CONCERN OURSELVES WITH."**

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Buckley was clearly inspired by George Orwell's famous 1945 essay "Politics and the English Language," in which the British novelist condemned staleness of imagery and lack of precision. Increasingly in political discourse, Orwell wrote, prose consists less and less of words chosen for the sake of their meaning and more of phrases "tacked together like the sections of a pre-fabricated hen-house."<sup>28</sup> Buckley acknowledged his debt to Orwell by titling the column, "Fowlerspeak-Goodspeak" (the former a reference to the English lexicographer H. W. Fowler).

It was his last column but not his last word. Buckley decided to write short memoirs about two of the most influential conservatives of the

20th century: Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.

In August 2007, he completed *Flying High*, which concentrates on the 1960s when Goldwater's forthright enunciation of conservative ideas inspired thousands of young people to take an interest in and remain in politics. The book is Buckley's fond farewell to a politician who, by refusing to compromise his principles, offered a stirring profile in courage and candor.

*The Reagan I Knew* includes private letters, recorded phone conversations, and personal reminiscences on such matters as the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with the Soviet Union (Reagan kept reassuring Buckley there was adequate verification); the Reagan children (Ron Jr. often wrote to "Uncle Bill"); and Buckley's secret and fictitious mission as "ambassador" to Afghanistan.

On February 27, 2008, death came for the most eloquent conservative of the 20th century. There would be no more words from the master of words.

### The St. Paul of the Modern American Conservative Movement

He was the maker of the American conservative movement—a master fusionist.

He was philosophically conservative but temperamentally libertarian.

Although no populist, he trusted the people and understood the many

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24. Bridges and Coyne, *Strictly Right*, p. 278.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

26. Bill Steigerwald, "William F. Buckley on Conservatism: An Interview," November 19, 2007, [http://townhall.com/columnists/billsteigerwald/2007/11/19/william\\_f\\_buckley\\_jr\\_on\\_conservatism\\_an\\_interview](http://townhall.com/columnists/billsteigerwald/2007/11/19/william_f_buckley_jr_on_conservatism_an_interview).

27. Bill Steigerwald, "William F. Buckley—A Nov 14, 2007 Interview," November 14 2007, [http://townhall.com/columnists/billsteigerwald/2008/02/27/william\\_f\\_buckley\\_-\\_a\\_nov\\_14\\_2007\\_interview/page/full/](http://townhall.com/columnists/billsteigerwald/2008/02/27/william_f_buckley_-_a_nov_14_2007_interview/page/full/).

28. George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," April 1946, [http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e\\_polit/](http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/).

flaws of the elite, accounting for his early witticism, “I should sooner live in a society governed by the first 2,000 names in the Boston telephone directory than in a society governed by the 2,000 faculty members of Harvard University.”<sup>29</sup>

He viewed Communism as the great enemy of America and the West: an enemy to be defeated, not accommodated.

He will live on in the sturdy journal of conservative opinion he founded; in his books, columns, speeches, and debates; in television interviews

by him and of him; in the editorials, reviews, forewords, and letters he composed; in a cataract of words unequalled—according to historian George Nash—by any other writer of the past century.

Bill Buckley could have been the playboy of the Western world but chose instead to be the St. Paul of the modern American conservative movement. His vision of ordered liberty shaped and molded and guided American conservatism from its infancy to its maturity, from a cramped suite of offices on

Manhattan’s East Side to the Oval Office of the White House, from a set of “irritable mental gestures” to a political force that transformed American politics.

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29. “Transcript for July 11,” NBC News, *Meet the Press*, July 11, 2004, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5409538/ns/meet\\_the\\_press/t/transcript-july/#.UGIEZaC06qw](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5409538/ns/meet_the_press/t/transcript-july/#.UGIEZaC06qw).