

ment thinking. That's an example of the power of culture.

On the bright side, here's another one. Not long ago, KSFO, the San Francisco ABC radio affiliate, decided to program the station with all conservative talk hosts. Not only has the format been a profound business success in that unlikely marketplace, it has also demonstrated its ability to affect political change. It was KSFO's talk-show hosts who, virtually alone, led opposition to the government-mandated toxic gasoline additive MTBE. Popular sentiment followed. It's only a matter of time now before MTBE is eliminated from our gas supply.

That's the way culture works, conservatives. Change people's hearts and minds and the politicians and the votes will follow. That means buying newspapers, radio stations, developing new educational resources, re-directing charitable contributions and, yes, even regaining control of our churches. Only then will there be a real future for California conservatism.

Geoff Metcalf

Doctor Robert Jarvick (inventor of the artificial heart) said *"Leaders are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear, and no concept of the odds against them. They make things happen."* Reading Tom McClintock's piece on "What Ails California Republicans?" my first reaction was "... lack of principled leadership." I host a daily radio talk show on a very conservative radio station in a very liberal city (San Francisco). I routinely interview conservatives and entertain calls from conservatives. In the

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wake of my experience I have some observations that some of you won't like. Unlike those of you who cling to partisanship, I focus on *what* is right or wrong rather than *who* is right or wrong. Ronald Reagan was right. Bill Clinton is wrong. I steadfastly reject the so-called eleventh commandment: Thou shalt not speak ill of any Republican. If you take umbrage at this, shame on you. What is gained in compromising principle for partisanship? If we continue to support and elect watered-down conservatives we will continue to get watered-down conservatives as candidates.

Reading Bill Rusher's "Conservatives' Unfinished Mission," the imperative I see is commitment to principle. However, first, one must embrace a principle (other than getting elected). The conservative challenge is twofold. First, to define one's conservatism: Do you support the Constitution and the Bill of Rights? Secondly, what will you do to defend your principles? Lead, follow, or get out of the way.



CPR Readers

Daniel J. Grimm, Ojai

Thanks to William Rusher and John Kurzweil for thoughtful statements on conservatives' unfinished mission. Our moral cancer has many symptoms, but all stem from the erroneous notion the human will is the creator and arbiter of the good. It doesn't take precise agreement on belief, or a theocracy, to build the necessary consensus to save civilization — just a humble acceptance that the inalienable truths, which don't depend on us but we on them, are the founda-

tion, justification and essential limitations of our liberties and laws.

As is obvious to almost every sane person, we are neither self-creating nor self-sustaining. The only mature thing to do is live in awareness of that reality. The modern thought experiment, since at least Descartes, pretending we aren't dependent, has led paradoxically to the most spectacular enslavements in history. The fact that it is a Supreme Intelligence that we are dependent on has not been so obvious to all, but all those not interested in living in the Gulag can make common cause in favor of affirming inalienable truth and resisting that relativism which quickly makes human society subhuman.

While agreeing with Mr. McClintock on virtually every particular of economic and legal prudence, I have to agree with Rusher and Kurzweil that if we don't address the fundamental question, all this prudence just places a band-aid on the cancer.

John C. Gardner, Bakersfield

Thank you for publishing the fine analysis by Tom McClintock of the root causes for Republican decline in California. It should be of great concern that nearly two thirds of new voter registrations are choosing "decline to state" or third parties when in the '80s a like proportion of new voters became Republicans. Clearly something is wrong, and Mr. McClintock's analysis seems to hit the mark. While I don't intend to ignore any of Mr. McClintock's points, his article brought to mind some lines spoken by William Wallace in the film *Braveheart*, when he was trying to persuade the Scottish nobles to join him in the

fight against England: "people don't follow the titles, they follow the courage." Certainly there are California Republicans who show great courage from time to time and who seem to prevail; Pete Wilson and Ward Connerly come most immediately to mind.

As a "rank and file" Republican, however, I found Mr. Kurzweil's response to Mr. McClintock profoundly disturbing. As an apology for the "few imperfect men" who now lead the party, it doesn't even get out of the starting gate. Mr. Kurzweil says Mr. McClintock's blanket characterization breaks down when applied to individuals as if individual behavior were the main problem. Unfortunately, what is under consideration is political, that is to say, *group* behavior. Groups are either geared for flight or fight. All too often, Mr. McClintock argues, the leadership as a group is in flight mode. Hence, his allusion to Mr. Churchill's comments about councils of war is right on point!

Mr. Kurzweil correctly attacks the idea that fear on the part of leadership is an "explanatory force accounting for the lack of conviction" evident in leadership. If he will re-check the article, Mr. Kurzweil will find that Mr. McClintock never argued such causation.

Next, Mr. Kurzweil attacks the proposition that Republican leaders took principled stands during the Reagan era, and he illustrates from his own experiences at the time in an attempt to show (I guess) that the current behavior from California Republican leadership is no more venal, misguided, shortsighted, and inconsistent than then. I won't quarrel with him on this; I wasn't in Washington then and I'm not

in Sacramento now. I was then, like many others, very aware that the Party was being led by a man of great principle, courage, and conviction; I am now, like many others, very aware that today's Party in California is not so led.

The next defense undertaken by Mr. Kurzweil appeared to me to have as its major thesis the idea

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that the Republican rank-and-file is so self-interested, lethargic (or downright lazy), uninformed, generally debased, and incapable of principle that (I guess) we don't deserve leadership with courage and conviction. Or else maybe he's arguing that we don't support such leadership. Or, that elected officials cannot accomplish anything unless the rank-and-file starts it first. Or perhaps that even though it is the job of leadership *to lead* that it won't work in this case. Whatever it is he's saying, one thing is clear: We're pretty awful and the leadership is to be pitied for having been stuck with the likes of us. There is a way out, however, as set forth in Mr. Kurzweil's last argument which I can only characterize as the "Hie thee to a nunnery" solution to the problem of dealing with the slings and arrows of our misfortune.

I almost hesitate to discuss Mr. Kurzweil's final argument because it is clear that this is supposed to be the "heavy" stuff missed by the mere politician, Tom McClintock, and also because it appears to me that Mr. Kurzweil is a person of religious conviction. Many of us share the concern he voices about the importance of religious values, and I certainly mean no disrespect for the argument advanced; I simply don't find it helpful politically. The argument: It is all because of the decline of religious values in Western Civilization. The answer: Look to the salvation of our individual souls and leave all to God's will (*i.e.*: "Hie thee to a nunnery"). This is, I must say, "inspired" avoidance of responsibility! More remarkably so for being set forth in a *political* journal. Perhaps Mr. Kurzweil should consider that some of us rank-and-file Republicans would like to take some effective action before the barbarians get here (of course, we don't see ourselves as *being* barbarians although Mr. Kurzweil evidently sees us that way). When we read the de Tocqueville quote ("not until I ... heard pulpits aflame with righteousness") we understand that even in that age someone had to have the courage to say the unpopular (else why the need to say it at all) and to lead others to act in concert in an attempt to effectuate it. But at least *they tried...*

John Kurzweil

California Political Review is honored by and I am grateful to all the participants in this two-part discussion. It was instigated by William Rusher's argument that conservatives' mission now is to fight for the West's Judaeo-Christian religious tradition against the

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