

# TriCorner News

from *The Lakeville Journal*,  
*The Millerton News* and *The Winsted Journal*

Published on *TriCorner News* (<http://tricornernews.com>)

[Home](#) > What makes a true conservative?

Charles R. Church is an attorney who devotes most of his efforts to human rights issues: detention, torture, the facility at Guantanamo Bay, habeas corpus, etc.  
His website is: [www.churchlawllc.com](http://www.churchlawllc.com)  
Email him at: [charleschurchllc@gmail.com](mailto:charleschurchllc@gmail.com)

## What makes a true conservative?

Thu, 05/09/2013 - 11:02am [Field Notes From A Battleground](#) [1] [Opinion/Viewpoint](#) [2]

By Charles R. Church

Some will remember Edmund Burke with great fondness for his ferocious opposition to the policies of King George III in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War. The Irishman and Member of Parliament was America's true friend. If Parliament and the king had followed Burke's advice, there would have been no revolution. He longed for her to remain within the Empire, and tenaciously fought George and Lord North on their imposition upon her of taxes (the colonies, after all, had no representatives in Parliament) and the Penal Acts. When the war came, and the great battles — first at Saratoga and later at Yorktown — sealed her independence, Burke was sorry to see her go. For he stood with America, just as she was being born.

Connor Cruise O'Brien also reminds us in his magisterial "The Great Melody: a thematic biography of Edmund Burke" of what a great — indeed definitive — conservative politician the man was. He would support those "principles of government ... founded upon the wisdom of antiquity, and sanctioned by the experience of time." "A pluralist, a defender of diversity against the claims of revolutionary absolutism," "Burke was opposed to all Jacobins (extremists, that is), Irish as well as English, and of course the French."

Burke was passionately indignant about the French Revolution, and saw before anyone else where it was headed. He sensed in the early, tranquil stage, "a period of constitution-making, of benevolent rhetoric and of peaceful jubilation..." that the revolution was just beginning. He was right, and the September Massacres, the Terror and the executions of the king and queen all came.

Burke expressed his conservative ideals best in his classic "Reflections on the Revolution in France": "Men must have a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for Freedom, else it become noxious to themselves and a perfect nuisance to everybody else."

And consider this:

"[I]n general, those who are habitually employed in finding and displaying faults are unqualified for the work of reformation; because their minds are not only unfurnished with patterns of the fair and good, but by habit they come to take no delight in the contemplation of those things. By hating vices too much, they come to love men too little."

And this:

“It is one of the excellencies of a method in which time is amongst the assistants, that its operation is slow, and in some cases almost imperceptible. If circumspection and caution are a part of wisdom, when we work only upon an inanimate matter, surely they become a part of duty too, when the subject of our demolition and construction is not brick and timber, but sentient beings, by the sudden alterations of whose state, condition and habits, multitudes may be rendered miserable.”

How do present-day Republican politicians stack up against Edmund Burke? As Lilliputians all, but these days many belong to a different species altogether. According to Charles M. Blow in the March 23 New York Times, the GOP is “experiencing an existential crisis, born of its own misguided incongruity with modern American culture and its insistence on choosing intransigence in a dynamic age of fundamental change.” The party’s ratings now stand at a 20-year low, “and too many of these hard-liners have a near-allergic reaction to the truth.”

And compare Burke, that great and true conservative marked, according to O’Brien, by “intellectual superiority,” a man he describes as “rarely uncharitable towards political opponents,” to a small cadre of Republicans in Salisbury that clamors for so much space in this paper. Tedious, hyperbolic hand-wringing about such things as “cronyism, personal and political interests and other forms of corruption,” apropos more to common scolds than serious conservatives. Complaints of being misunderstood, or unfairly treated. They seem concerned more about pushing their radical agenda than good governance.

When the townspeople go against them, as they seem to do these days, their constant refrain is “intimidation,” whether in Town Hall itself or throughout the polity. They simply are not willing to accept that the people don’t want their divisiveness, their extreme ideas. They seem unable to acknowledge that it is their own bellicose ways that deter mainstream Republicans, far closer in kinship to Burke than they, from having anything to do with them.

They make one point that no doubt is true. No party, no particular point of view, has a monopoly on truth. Very distinctly, then, a differing and even opposing point of view needs to be voiced in Salisbury. If Edmund Burke were alive and living in Salisbury, I think he would exhort that such point of view needs to be less radical in content, and not so offensively delivered. If that advice were followed, the Salisbury Republican Town Committee (SRTC) might find other registered Republicans and unaffiliated voters who would feel its members can be trusted, who at times at least would stand with them.

No doubt many true Republicans and conservatives registered as unaffiliated voters reside in Salisbury, more like Burke than the SRTC people, but their voices are being drowned out by the commotion of relatively few. It’s time for more of those true conservatives to be like Burke, and stand upon their legs.

Charles R. Church is an attorney practicing in Salisbury who focuses primarily on Guantanamo Bay, detention, torture, habeas corpus and related issues.

The Lakeville Journal Co., LLC ©2013. All Rights Reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact Us](#)

**Source URL:** <http://tricornernews.com/node/29648>

**Links:**

[1] <http://tricornernews.com/category/opinion-author/field-notes-battleground>

[2] <http://tricornernews.com/category/articlead-category/lakeville-journal/opinionviewpoint>