



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on January 3, 2013

GOP: A Party of “Moderates”

In his recent column entitled “[Happy New Year?](#)” the widely respected Thomas Sowell remarks upon the GOP’s decades long insistence upon nominating “ad hoc moderates” — like Mitt Romney — as their presidential candidates — even though these moderates unfailingly “get beaten by even vulnerable, unknown or discredited Democrats.”

Sowell expresses what appears to be the consensus among many in talk radio, to say nothing of the rank-and-file of the Republican Party.

Sadly, far from shedding light on the GOP’s woes, this consensus is a reflection of them.

When Republican voters decry “ad hoc moderates,” it is to “Republican-In-Name-Only” (RINO) types that they refer. That is, it is Republican *liberals* for whom they reserve their disdain. But this grievance implies that there is a meaningful distinction to be drawn between Republicans who are “moderates” and those who are not.

The truth of the matter is that no such distinction exists.

In other words, with few exceptions, the vast majority of Republican politicians are “moderates.” In practice, if not always in rhetoric, they are liberals, Big Government tax-and-spenders.

Doubtless, the widely shared perception among those on the right that Mitt Romney is, as Newt Gingrich referred to him in the presidential primaries, a “Massachusetts moderate,” is correct. Seldom noted, however, is that Gingrich himself is no less of a “moderate.” In fact, Gingrich is actually *more* of a “moderate” than the former Massachusetts governor.

From his support for “spreading” Democracy around the planet, foreign aid, and an individual “health care” mandate, to his support for a ‘flex fuel’ mandate, Medicare D, the bank bailouts of 2008, and everything in between, Gingrich is as avid a proponent of Big Government as there is. Yet Gingrich isn’t the only “conservative” alternative to Romney from the primaries who isn’t conservative. Rick Santorum is another.

The U.S. government currently has its military personnel in some 160 countries or so. Santorum wants an even *stronger* American military presence. He also never renounced the “Compassionate Conservatism” that he once avowed, an ideology of Gargantuan Government that lead Santorum to call for greater government involvement in the life of civil society — *including* its religious institutions.

In 2005 Santorum gave a speech to the Heritage Foundation in which he claimed: “If government is to





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be effective,” then “charities, houses of worship, and other civil institutions” have to be, not just “respected,” but “*nurtured*” (emphasis mine). Among the things that he wanted to see done is for the federal government to “dedicate a larger percentage of” its “GDP to foreign aid” and to abolish “genocide, international sex trafficking and the oppression of minority groups ... around the world.”

George W. Bush, in spite of winning two terms and presiding over a Republican-controlled Congress for 75 percent of his time as president, was at least as much, and probably much more of a “moderate,” than Romney or any other RINO.

The federal government continued to swell under Bush and his Republicans. His “Compassionate Conservatism” did absolutely nothing to advance anything that can remotely be called “conservative” and much to retard it. Not since Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society has federal spending increased to the extent that it did under Bush’s watch.

It isn’t just these much touted “conservative” stars and veterans of the GOP who are indistinguishable from the “moderates” who self-styled conservatives disdain. While it borders on blasphemy to suggest it, the truth is that no less a figure than Ronald W. Reagan was also a “moderate.”

In other words, Reagan, though brilliant at articulating a vision of liberty, did not govern as a conservative.

The federal government ballooned during Reagan’s eight years as president. He succeeded in eliminating not a single government program, let alone an agency. Taxes were cut in his first year as president, yes, but they were increased many times after that. Spending far exceeded even Jimmy Carter’s wildest forecast, we “cut and run” after more than 200 of our Marines were killed in Lebanon, and millions of illegal immigrants were granted amnesty — all during Reagan’s tenure.

The Republican Party is not divided between conservatives and “moderates.” It consists of varying degrees of “moderates.” Until this is grasped — that is, until Republicans realize that the way to win future elections is to make sure that they are, well, conservative — Republicans will continue to lose ground with the American public.



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