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Is conservatism dead?

by [James Piereson](#)

A reply to Sam Tanenhaus's new book, *The Death of Conservatism*.

When in 1962 Clinton Rossiter published a revised edition of *Conservatism in America*, he gave it the subtitle *The Thankless Persuasion*. A decade earlier, Raymond English had touched upon a similar theme in an article in *The American Scholar* titled “Conservatism: The Forbidden Faith.” Their point was that conservatism as a political philosophy runs against the American grain and thus will always play something of an incongruous and subordinate role in a revolutionary nation dedicated to equality, democracy, and restless change. While the conservative case for order, tradition, and authority may be useful as a corrective for the excesses of democracy, it can never hope to supplant liberalism as the nation’s official governing philosophy. As Rossiter put it, “Our commitment to democracy means that Liberalism will maintain its historic dominance over our minds, and that conservativ ...

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