



the OXFORD UNION

Daniel Wilkinson
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Wednesday 5th December 2018

Dear Mr Donohue,

I am writing to extend an invitation for you to speak at the Oxford Union in one of our historic debates this coming term. It would be a great privilege were you to accept this invitation, and I sincerely hope you will be able to join us for the debate.

The Oxford Union was founded in 1823 by students protesting the restrictions placed on freedom of speech and expression by the University of Oxford. Since our foundation, the Oxford Union has been defined by its outspokenness and dedication to creating the conversations that matter. Through that aim, we have evolved into one of the most prestigious student societies in the world.

Throughout our history, we have played host to world-leading politicians, thinkers, and activists alike who have spoken on the most important issues of the day. From former Presidents Nixon, Carter, and Reagan, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Oxford Union has been at the forefront of contemporary political and social debate. It would be an honour if you were to join us in debate and continue this fine tradition.

We would be delighted, therefore, were you to speak on the motion:

This House Believes The Catholic Church Can Never Pay For Its Sins

In the wake of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, the Catholic Church has once again been put under the public spotlight for its actions. Following revelations about prolific child sexual abuse and the false imprisonment within the infamous Magdalene laundries, the church has taken steps to accept responsibility for the actions of its members including public apologies, expelling priests, and limited payout programs for victims. Whilst living up to a message of repentance is something of clear importance to the Church's new leadership, critics argue that based on the scale of damage done, efforts continue to be insufficient. In light of this we ask, can the Catholic Church ever pay for its sins?

As is tradition, the debate will be held on a Thursday evening, though there are currently a number of possible dates: **17th January, 24th January, 31st January, 7th February, 21st February, 28th February.**

The Union offers a unique combination of tradition and prestige, with our student members often constituting those who go on to be the leaders of tomorrow. Almost all of our debates have been uploaded to the Oxford Union YouTube channel, but of course, the level of media attention would be entirely up to your discretion.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any wish to discuss this invitation further.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Wilkinson
President

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CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious
and
Civil Rights*

January 9, 2019

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Mr. Daniel Wilkinson
President
The Oxford Union
Frewin Court
Oxford, OX1, 3JB, Great Britain

Dear Mr. Wilkinson:

I am appalled that the Oxford Union would invite me to a debate and then, in effect, disinvite me. You have much to explain.

On December 5, two emails were sent to the Catholic League inviting me to a debate: one was written by you and the other was written by your assistant, Beatrice Barr. "I am writing to extend an invitation for you to speak at the Oxford Union in one of our historic debates," you said. "It would be a great privilege were you to accept this invitation, and I sincerely hope you will be able to join us in the debate."

I was given six dates to choose from: three in January and three in February. I was asked to speak to the motion, "This House Believes The Catholic Church Can Never Pay For Its Sins." On the same day, I agreed.

Rick Hinshaw, the Catholic League's director of communications, emailed Ms. Barr, copying you, saying "Dr. Donohue would be most pleased to participate in this debate." He mentioned my preference, February 21, stating, "He will await further word from you as to details."

Barr got back the same day, saying, "Thank you for your rapid response—the Union would be honoured to host Dr Donohue." She provided information about the format of the debate, the dinner prior to it, and a general overview of travel costs and accommodations.

Barr said the date was uncertain, "but it looks likely to be the 21st or 28th February—would the latter equally be convenient to Dr Donohue?" Hinshaw immediately replied that I would be open to the 28th.

On December 10th, Hinshaw emailed Barr asking if the date had been chosen. On December 11th, Barr wrote back, saying it "is almost certain to be February 28th." She added, "Thanks so much to you and Bill for your continued interest."

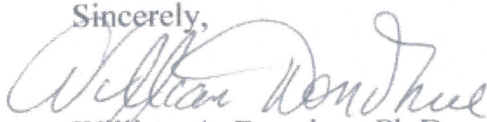
We awaited notification of more details, but given that the holidays were upon us, and the basics were settled, we did not expect to hear anything more until after the new year. Today, I asked Hinshaw to contact Barr about firming up some of the particulars.

Barr wrote, "Apologies, but as we did not hear back from you we've now filled the debate," saying that perhaps there will be another time.

This is unacceptable, unprofessional, and not believable. In one of her emails on December 5, Barr said, "I will continue to update you on plans for the debate as we develop them." Then why didn't she, or anyone else, reach out to Hinshaw or me saying they were ready to discuss the event in greater detail?

I would like to know the exact reason why I was disinvited. Was it because no one would debate me? If not, you need to be specific.

Sincerely,



William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

OXFORD UNION SPONSORS STAGED DEBATE

Bill Donohue

Is the Oxford Union committing suicide? It is one thing to lie to me after being disinvited from participating in a debate on February 28, quite another to knife itself by staging a phony debate on the Catholic Church.

"This House Believes That England Can Never Pay For Its Sins Against Irish Catholics." Imagine a debate on this subject with representatives of the Irish Republican Army on one side and Sinn Fein (the political arm of the IRA) on the other. This is what the Oxford Union did by stacking the deck against the Catholic Church on the motion, "The House Believes The Catholic Church Can Never Pay For Its Sins."

The three defending the House motion were Mitchell Garabedian, Elizabeth Coppin, and Thomas Reilly. I am familiar with the two American men.

Garabedian was a good choice. Last year he appeared on WGBH (PBS) in Boston arguing that the Catholic Church should be stripped of its tax-exempt status. In 2011, he was accused by a reporter for the *Boston Globe* (not exactly a Catholic-friendly source) of maligning the good name of an exonerated priest whom the attorney was hounding. When I called Garabedian to see if he had any regrets about trying to destroy Father Charles Murphy, he went berserk, screaming like a madman. He fits in with this circus like a glove.

Reilly was also a splendid choice. He showcased his contempt for separation of church and state when he was the Massachusetts Attorney General: He said he wanted his office to be involved in the recruitment, selection, training, and monitoring of priests.

If a Boston bishop, acting on reports of corruption in the state government, said he wanted the

Church to police public officials and their staffs, he would be accused of trampling on the First Amendment. Indeed, he would be called a fascist. Perhaps Reilly could have been asked why he never returned a single indictment of a Boston priest in 2003, and why he thinks he was justified in wasting a colossal amount of public funds on a wild-goose chase (he knew the statute of limitations had long run out on miscreant priests).

The side that was selected to defend the Catholic Church was even better. It included only two persons, one of whom, Dr. Jay R. Feierman, is a former psychiatrist who treated offending priests. I am not familiar with him.

The big prize was Marci Hamilton. For the Oxford Union to treat her as a champion of the Catholic Church is analogous to selecting a supporter of the Klan to defend African Americans.

To begin with, Hamilton and Garabedian are one and the same. They have jointly sued the Holy See, unsuccessfully, and have served on the same panels at anti-Catholic conferences for years. She has quite a resume.

• Hamilton's career attacking the Catholic Church began when she was sought out by Jeffrey Anderson, the most anti-Catholic, Church-suing lawyer in the U.S. His goal, he once said, is to "sue the s*** out of the Catholic Church." He has made good on his promise.

• A few years back, Hamilton teamed up with Anderson to sue the Holy See. They lost.

• Hamilton is opposed to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the seminal bill protecting religious liberty that was overwhelmingly passed by the Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

• Hamilton falsely accused Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, of hiding \$55 million from victims when he was the Bishop of Milwaukee. She has never apologized.

• In 2013, Hamilton said that the Catholic Church's objections to having Catholic non-profits pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans was proof of its "all-out war on women."

• Hamilton always seeks to rescind state laws on the statute of limitations so that she can sue the Catholic Church for decades-old offenses, while at the same time arguing that such legislation *should not apply* to the public schools. She made this case in her 2008 book, *Justice Denied: What America Must Do to Protect Its Children*, and worked to implement her ideas in Colorado and other states.

• In 2016, Hamilton told the press that the U.S. bishops pay my salary. I emailed her on May 5, 2016 calling her a liar. She had no response.

• When discussing the Muslim terrorists involved in the Danish cartoon issue, Hamilton said, "There is no meaningful difference between the reasoning of imams and the Catholic League on these issues," thus maliciously claiming the Catholic League engages in, or promotes, violence against its critics.

There we have it. The Oxford Union is in free-fall. It hosted anti-Catholic bigots to defend the Catholic Church, making a mockery of its once stellar reputation.

If any of these haters would like to debate me, I will arrange it and pay for all the expenses. But I won't hang by the phone. At least Christopher Hitchens, whom I debated many times, was honest, which is more than I can say for the Oxford Union and its stooges.