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NOTRE DAME NOT PREVIOUS SELF, WHAT 2020 DEBATE CAN EXPECT.

by

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Notre Dame is not what it once was, nor yet what it is destined to become. But recent events show that Notre Dame is on its way to fast becoming what it is going to be.

Notre Dame reportedly has been selected to be the site of the first Debate in 2020. Mike Berardino, *U.S. Attorney General William Barr Decries Attacks on Religious Freedom in Notre Dame Speech*, [INDIANAPOLIS STAR, posted online Friday, October 11, 2019](#). Here is the kind of thing that we can reasonably anticipate based on the recent evidence.

Notre Dame once attracted and invited speakers who had accomplished great things. Public intellectuals like Daniel P. Moynihan and William F. Buckley, Jr. Former Presidents of the United States like Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

Notre Dame now attracts and invites Mike Pence and William Barr.

Notre Dame then presented its invited speakers to the student body and to the public. In the open.

Notre Dame now invited Bill Barr to speak behind closed doors. His speech was not announced to the student body at large or to the public in advance. (Presumably the event was kept as secret as possible to avoid any involvement, shall we say, by the N.D. student body with his speech.) He spoke to a gathering at the Law School. Secrecy was imposed at the end like it was at the beginning. At the end of his speech, Barr did not take questions from reporters. Rather, reporters were led out of the room when he began discussing various topics at the conclusion of his prepared remarks. [INDIANAPOLIS STAR](#), *supra*.

Notre Dame back in the day had a President of the University named Theodore Hesburgh who was Chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission until he resigned in protest at the un-American activities of Richard Nixon.

Notre Dame now listened -- or at least some people at Notre Dame did, the few who knew what was coming -- to Mr. Barr speak on the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of religion and separation of Church and state. Those are the First Amendment guarantees Barr chose to address at Notre Dame.

Mr. Barr claimed in his remarks at the foremost Catholic University in America that religion is under attack from "secularists" and "so-called progressives." He said: "This is not decay. This is organized destruction. Secularists and their allies have marshaled all the forces of mass communication, popular culture, the entertainment industry, and academia in an unrelenting assault on religion and traditional values." *Quoted by Pema Levy, Attorney General Barr Rages Against Secularist "Assault" on Religion, [MOTHER JONES MAGAZINE, posted online Saturday, October 12, 2019](#).* Parenthetically, the author of the report in Mother Jones Magazine points out that Barr served as General Counsel at Verizon for eight years, has been paid to attend the meetings of the Time Warner Board of Directors for nine years, and represented GTE the telecommunications giant, all of which presumably informed what he had to say about "the forces of mass communication" and "popular culture" and "the entertainment industry."

He nevertheless condemned a "monstrous invasion of religious liberty" by these people. As a result of their actions in denigration of religion, he said, Americans face the "consequences of moral chaos." [INDIANAPOLIS STAR](#), *supra*.

While delivering his remarks at Notre Dame, Mr. Barr apparently did not address either the consequences or the moral rationales of such things as taking babies from their parents, or losing track of children once they were in the custody of the United States Government, or proposing to revise regulations so that people in desperate need of Food Stamps have a harder time getting food to eat. Those and similar subjects might have been of

interest at a University dedicated to a Catholic doctrine that the meek are blessed, that the homeless should be sheltered, and that the hungry should be fed. Yet Mr. Barr spoke of none of these things. In his capacity as Attorney General of the United States, he spoke against "secularists" and "so-called progressives," whom he described as people who try to enforce laws as a "battering ram to establish moral relativism." See [*id.*](#)

Oh, and Mr. Barr also addressed the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Notre Dame is located in Indiana, but it is not close to Indianapolis, at least historically.) The Archdiocese of Indiana ordered a teacher fired, you may have heard, because of the teacher's same-sex marriage. The teacher in question had previously kept the existence of his marriage out of the workplace. He did not bring it up when talking with his colleagues or with students at the school where he taught. The Archdiocese nevertheless took it upon itself to ignore the admonition, "Who am I to judge." The Archdiocese of Indiana fired the teacher. The teacher then sued them for firing him.

You might have thought that all this would escape the notice of the Attorney General of the United States, but no. Barr noticed it, especially the lawsuit that the teacher filed against the Archdiocese after it fired him. "The lawsuit clearly infringes on the First Amendment rights of the Archdiocese by interfering both with its expressive association and with its church autonomy." [*Id.*](#)

The teacher's affront on the dignity of the state and the Church could not be tolerated, Barr reflected in his remarks to Notre Dame. "The Department of Justice filed a statement of interest in the state court making these points and we hope that the state court will soon dismiss this case," he said. [*Id.*](#)

Caveat Progressives and Democrats looking ahead to the September 2020 Debate at Notre Dame. If you expect to see what Notre Dame once was, you may get a very unpleasant surprise.

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