

## TELEGRAPH

**Raising Nigel Biggar to the Lords is Badenoch's best decision as Tory leader so far**  
As one of Britain's leading centre-right intellectuals, the distinguished priest will greatly improve the lightweight tory benches



[William Atkinson](#)



Few would suggest [Kemi Badenoch](#) had has a perfect start as Leader of the Conservative Party.

Faltering [PMQs](#) matched with a half-hearted immigration mea culpa and a one-woman war on sandwiches have left quite a few Tories with a feeling of buyer's remorse. But sending [Nigel Biggar](#) to the House of Lords is Badenoch's best decision of her leadership so far. Through a long and distinguished career as an Anglican priest, theologian, and ethicist, culminating in Oxford's Regius Professorship of Moral and Pastoral Theology, Biggar has established himself as the late Roger Scruton's heir as Britain's leading centre-Right intellectual.

The [Conservative Party](#) was far too slow in getting Scruton his knighthood and far too quick in dropping him as an adviser when he fell victim to a *New Statesman* hatchet job. It is thus refreshing that Badenoch has moved with such alacrity to award the recently-retired Biggar a long overdue peerage.

For those of us lucky enough to have been at Christ Church whilst Biggar was a canon, he is best remembered striding purposefully across Tom Quad, eyes squarely fixed on his next subject of interest. But readers from outside the House will know of Biggar for his unwillingness to surrender in the face of the academic mob when establishing his "[Ethics and Empire](#)" project.

Designed to scrutinise critiques of imperialism against the historical record, Biggar's project drew outrage from those who reject suggestion that any empire, let alone the British, may have done good as well as evil. Rather than shirk from this attempted cancellation, an unhappy conscript to our cultural wars, Biggar ploughed on, producing his 2022 book [Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning](#).

Having seen first-hand the threat to free speech and academic inquiry posed by foaming foot soldiers of progressive orthodoxy, Biggar has become a champion for those wishing to uphold the principles of empiricism and rational discussion against tiresome cancel culture. He chairs both [Toby Young's Free Speech Union and the Pharos Foundation](#), which provides financial support for postdocs in Oxford. (In another welcome development, [Toby Young was also ennobled today](#).)

Rather than be a down-the-line Tory, Biggar is [best thought of as a traditional liberal](#), not spoiling for a fight, but a thoughtful and temperate defender of free inquiry. What a refreshing change his intellect will make from the usual turgid cast of ageing ex-MPs clogging up the upper chamber's red benches.

But could he go one better? Before his dabble with empire, Biggar found himself sufficiently underwhelmed by Better Together's attempt to keep his native Scotland in the union to join the These Islands project of historian Tom Holland, designed to make the historical and emotional case for Britishness neglected by the financial myopia of the original "Project Fear".

Biggar may be looking forward to nothing more than a happy retirement quietly tearing apart the arguments of his sluggish interlocutors. But Badenoch could do no better in improving her underwhelming [Shadow Cabinet](#) by making Biggar her Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland.