

**BBC REPORTS ON SEXUAL ABUSE:
FROM JIMMY SAVILE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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Overview

The Dame Janet Smith Review Report on BBC serial rapist Jimmy Savile has many strengths and weaknesses. Her greatest strength is her ability to understand the sociological underpinnings of Savile's predatory behavior and the reasons why his conduct was not taken seriously at work. What makes this particularly commendable is that her training is in law, not social science: she is a former judge.

Smith's greatest weakness is her readiness to exculpate the BBC hierarchy: she wants us to believe that *no one* in a senior management position ever knew anything about Savile's sexual offenses. What makes this so remarkable is Savile's long history of abuse: he worked at the organization for more than 25 years—molesting some of his victims on the premises of the BBC—and he bragged about his exploits in public. To come to this conclusion, Smith sets the evidentiary bar quite high. A less legalistic examination would not have been so forgiving.

The report was three years in the making and it runs more than 700 pages. By any measure, Jimmy Savile was one of the most beastly sexual abusers in recent history. Predictably, he showed no remorse. If anything, he was in perpetual denial, claiming how awful it was for someone to force himself on someone else. But he was no lover—he was incapable of love—he was a pathological predator.

To get a sense of who Savile was, Americans can fathom a cross between Dick Clark of "American Bandstand" and comedian Jerry Lewis (this was how Bill Keller of the *New York Times* aptly put it). If we coupled this admixture with a heady dose of Michael Jackson and Pee-wee Herman, we get a sense of who he was. Regarding his behavior, he made the latter two look angelic.

What brought Savile instant recognition was his show "Top of the Pops," which debuted in 1964. It was broadcast early on Saturday evenings,

bringing him to the attention of families. In 1975, he launched a new BBC show, "Jim'll Fix It"; it attracted 16.5 million viewers, an astonishing number even by today's standards. Two years later, he won a prestigious award for "wholesome family entertainment." One major newspaper said that this show made him the "favourite uncle to the nation's children." Yet by this time he had raped many of them.

Savile's role as a regular BBC host ended in 1994 when "Jim'll Fix It" went off the air. But he was not done: he co-hosted the final "Top of the Pops" show in 2006. He died five years later.

"Savile had a voracious sex appetite," the report says. "So far as I can tell," Smith observes, "he never had and did not want a lasting sexual relationship and he never had an emotional attachment to anyone with whom he had a sexual relationship." That's because he was a classic narcissist, incapable of giving himself to another human being. Savile did what he did—fondling, grabbing, raping—because that is what he wanted to do. How others felt, even those he did not force himself on, did not matter. What mattered is that he experienced pleasure. But it would be wrong to say he experienced happiness.

His interactions with others were variable. Young girls, many of whom he attacked, were drawn to him because of his celebrity status. Others found him likeable because of his charitable work with those in need; he achieved knighthood as a result. [Note: Sir Robert Armstrong, then the most senior civil servant in the nation, opposed making him a knight, citing his well-known promiscuity. Armstrong, however, was in the minority.]

Savile's co-workers at the BBC found him "weird," "strange," "cold," "peculiar," "predatory," and "loathsome." To many others, he was simply bizarre and relatively harmless. Some of these folks suspected that he was disturbed, but they did not want to appear judgmental, so they blithely dismissed him as "absolutely creepy."

These descriptions are much too kind, but are understandable. In fairness, his colleagues were not privy to what he did to his victims; they were just commenting on his behavior at work. Before turning to Smith's report, consider what we know from other independent sources.

Savile was so sick that he actually assaulted his own niece. Sadly, her grandmother knew about it but kept quiet, and that is because her brother, Jimmy, made sure she had a comfortable lifestyle. Savile routinely got away with conduct like this. In 1976, when a man walked into Savile's dressing room and found him molesting a 9-year-old boy, he simply said, "Oops," and shut the door.

Here is what *MailOnline* said about Savile's victims in 2012: "The picture they paint is of a 'classic' child abuser, targeting vulnerable youngsters at schools, hospitals and children's homes....He plied them with treats—under the noses of teachers, doctors and BBC managers—and took them for rides in his Rolls-Royce....Savile sexually abused them in his car, his BBC dressing room, on hospital wards and in the bedrooms of girls at Duncroft boarding school in Surrey." Indeed, one of his victims at the latter institution said that he "treated Duncroft like a paedophile sweet shop."

Savile was evil. How else to describe a man who would rape a 12-year-old girl during a secret Satanic ritual in a hospital, screaming "Hail Satan" in a candle-lit room? What other word could be used to describe a man who performed sex acts on hundreds of dead bodies in a hospital where he was a volunteer—for over 60 years (1951 to 2011, the year he died)?

Evidence

According to the U.K.'s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Savile abused more than 500 people. But Smith, relying only

on uncontested evidence, understandably puts the figure much lower. As a judge, she confined herself to 75 complainants, accepting the evidence of 72 of them. What she found is reeling.

Of the 72 victims that Smith interviewed, 57 were female and 15 were male. Twenty-one of the female victims, and 13 of the male victims, were under 16. Eight were raped (six female and two male; there was an attempted rape of one female victim). Forty-seven victims were the subject of indecent/sexual assault excluding rape (34 female and 13 male). Savile's two big shows, "Top of the Pops" and "Jim'll Fix It," were implicated in most of the assaults. Ten of the offenses took place in the 1960s, 44 in the 1970s, and 17 in the 1980s.

An examination of the chronology of Savile's life proves revealing. Here are some of the more relevant facts.

Savile was born in 1926 and started working in ballrooms and doing radio jobs in the 1950s. In 1959, he made his first appearance as a guest on "Juke Box Jury" at Lime Grove Studios. That same year he raped a 13-year-old girl at work. On January 1, 1964, he started his fabulously successful "Top of the Pops"; it was the beginning of his long career at the BBC. He then went on a rampage sexually assaulting and raping young men and women in bathrooms, his home, dressing rooms, his camper, and on staircases. So bold was he that he even sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl on a podium during the recording of "Top of the Pops."

In 1974, Savile published his biography, *As It Happens* (more about this later). The following year he launched "Jim'll Fix It." He continued his predatory behavior, sexually assaulting a child (aged 10-12) in a church. In 1976, his autobiography was republished under the new title, *Love is an Uphill Thing*. That same year he raped a child of 10 or 11 in his dressing room. All of this was unbeknownst to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who, in the early 1980s, proposed him for knighthood; he received that award, and a papal knighthood, in 1990.

Savile ceased presenting "Top of the Pops" in 1984, but it wasn't until 2006 that the final episode of this show was aired. In 2009, he was interviewed by the police following reports of sexual assault at a school, but nothing came of it. In fact, nothing ever came of any investigation. Savile died in 2011, and six weeks later a BBC probe of his offenses was abandoned. But a year later, the BBC announced there would be two independent investigations.

Most of Savile's assaults took place in his residence, but he was not shy about attacking his victims at work. According to Smith, "Savile would gratify himself whenever the opportunity arose." Indeed, she learned of incidents "which took place in every one of the BBC premises at which he worked." Whether on the set, in dressing rooms—even when recording live on camera—he did exactly what he wanted.

"So far as I can tell," Smith writes, "he never had and did not want a lasting sexual relationship and he never had an emotional attachment to anyone with whom he had a sexual relationship." It was precisely his inability to connect with others that allowed him to proceed without guilt. Moreover, his victims were across age and sex lines. "Savile's youngest victim from whom I heard was just eight years old," says Smith. Of course, Savile's sexual appetite was not limited to the very young. He would seek gratification from men and women, boys and girls—he was an equal opportunity molester. Those most at risk were teenage girls.

The Role of Culture

Savile alone was responsible for his behavior, but his offenses, and the way his colleagues reacted, cannot be understood absent an appreciation of the role that the prevailing culture played. We need to understand the mores that were extant at the BBC, as well as the prevailing norms and values of the larger society.

The BBC has many departments and not all have the same culture. Smith concentrates mostly on the entertainment unit because that is where Savile was employed. She learned that while having sex on the BBC premises was a dismissible offense, "this 'rule' was more honoured in the breach than the observance. No witness told me of an actual case of dismissal."

The BBC's norms were effectively exploited by Savile. Smith found that officers would tolerate sex but not being drunk or coming to work late. For example, in 1969, a woman complained to her superiors after Savile grabbed her breasts but nothing was done about it. "The reaction of one of the managers was to show no surprise and to suggest that it would have been more surprising if Savile had not tried to touch her." Smith concludes, "That was an inappropriate reaction but one which is not surprising given the culture of the times."

Smith emphasizes that "the culture of the times both within and without the BBC was such that incidents of this kind were not treated seriously and, as a result, I am not surprised that none of these reports resulted in a full investigation." In other words, Savile's bosses were so nonchalant about sexual offenses that they were always ready to give him a pass. It was actually much worse than this. When Savile "put his hand down inside her knickers underneath her bottom," and this "young innocent girl" complained, "a security officer was summoned and told to escort her off the premises. She was taken out and left on the street."

Over and over again, Savile's crimes were seen as "harmless fun," his complainants written off as "a nuisance." Consider, for example, the following incident that took place in the late 1970s on the BBC's premises. "He was on a low sofa. He lunged at her and kissed her forcibly, grabbing at her breasts and putting his hand down inside her top. He took hold of her hand and put it inside his tracksuit bottoms. His penis was erect. She ran out of the curtained area" and told her boss what had happened. "He treated her as if she was being silly and told her that she should go back in."

Just as in the U.S., the 1960s was the start of the sexual revolution, a decade that saw the birth of libertinism. The 1970s was the decade when these reckless ideas of liberty were acted out, leaving a trail of disease and death behind. These two morally debased decades stand in stark contrast to the sexual reticence that marked the 1950s. They also represent something that Smith fails to address: the de-Christianization of society, and the acceptance of a secular, highly individualistic sexual ethic.

Smith provides an excellent account of how the culture changed. "In the 1950s," she notes, "sex outside marriage was generally disapproved of and those who indulged, particularly women, often acquired a bad reputation. However, by the 1960s, people were becoming more open and accepting of such relationships." Technology also played a role with the availability of the birth control pill in the early 1960s.

The law often follows the culture (it also induces cultural changes). In the late 1960s, England legalized abortion and homosexuality, and relaxed its divorce laws. In 1970, the age of consent was lowered from 21 to 18, setting off a national discussion on whether the age should be even lower. Savile, it should be noted, said the age of consent should be lowered "to about 12 to 14."

These cultural changes do not exonerate Savile's behavior. But when a society becomes more accepting of sexual promiscuity, including sexual deviance, it is not surprising that predators are smart enough to pick up on this, interpreting these signals as a green light.

BBC's Culpability

As we have seen, Savile's offenses were well known to his immediate superiors. Smith contends, however, that when it comes to the top of the BBC hierarchy, those officers were kept in the dark.

"In summary," Smith says, "my conclusion is that certain junior and middle-ranking individuals were aware of Savile's inappropriate sexual conduct in connection with his work for the BBC. However, I have found no evidence that the BBC, as a body corporate, was aware of Savile's inappropriate sexual conduct in connection with his work for the BBC." Similarly, "No senior manager ever found out about any specific complaint relating to Savile's inappropriate sexual conduct in connection with his work for the BBC."

If Smith's conclusion is to be believed, how could it be that Savile's superiors knew of his conduct but no one at the top knew? Smith says there was no whistle-blowing policy at the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s, and that in her experience as a lawyer and judge, "antipathy to a whistle-blower, unattractive though it is, seems to be a basic human instinct." Still, the culture of the BBC fed this instinct.

Smith writes of a "culture of not complaining," making it "difficult to complain or say anything to management which might 'rock the boat.'" Employees, she learned, did not want to "damage their careers," and so they elected to say nothing. In fact, she says "an atmosphere of fear exists today in the BBC."

Loyalty also played a role. There was a "strong sense of loyalty that BBC staff felt towards the programme on which they were working." This had disastrous consequences. "The BBC appears to have been much more concerned about its reputation and the possibility of adverse comment in the media than in actually focussing on the need to protect vulnerable young audiences."

The English media do not accept Smith's exculpatory account of senior management.

- "Dame Janet Smith is asking us to believe that people at a certain level of management at the BBC and above, those in the loftier positions of management, had not heard the persistent and consistent rumours that everybody else who worked in the BBC, on the shop floor, had heard for years." (*Guardian*)
- Her report is "an expensive whitewash." (*Daily Mail*)
- "Any reasonable reader must have some sympathy for this view" [that the report is a "whitewash."] (*London Times*)
- "The BBC can have no complaint when victims dismiss [the report] as a 1,000-page whitewash." (*Mirror*)
- The report's "lawyerly approach to apportioning blame often seems to be making the case for the defence." (*Daily Telegraph*)
- "It is clear" from her report that the BBC's staff "knew of improper conduct" and that "it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it has left stones unturned." (*Independent*)

The media reaction to Smith's report takes on greater currency when we consider that it wasn't just Savile who got away scot-free. BBC employee Stuart Hall was imprisoned in 2013 for sexually assaulting 13 girls from 1967 to 1985. According to a *New York Times* story, he was so open about his sexual conduct that he "cut the pubic hair of one of his victims, a girl of 14 or 15, and put the clippings in a picture frame on his shelf at BBC premises."

Savile's Public Admissions

It can be debated how much or how little the higher ups in the BBC knew of Savile's behavior from managers below them. But it strains credulity to suggest that none of them knew of his very public admissions of sexual conquest: he wrote about them in his books.

In his autobiography, *As It Happens*, Savile bragged how he liked group sex, saying that his celebrity status meant that girls were "throwing themselves" at him. He estimated that about 20 percent of female audiences would "fancy" him, concluding that about 25 "super dolly birds" would be "putting the pressure on me" each night.

The *Guardian* loved his book, calling it "very funny." The review, as Smith notes, included a quotation about all the places Savile had sex: "trains and boats and planes and bushes and fields, corridors, doorways, floors, chairs, slag heaps, desks and probably everything except the celebrated chandelier and ironing board."

In 1983, Savile granted an interview to the *Sun*. He certainly had a very high opinion of himself. "The people who work for me call me The Godfather. And nobody messes with The Godfather. He is the boss. The big man. I know how to take care of myself and I know how to take care of anyone who gets a bit cocky, a bit above himself. Some of the hairy things I've done would get me ten years inside."

Savile was very honest about his exploits. "I like girls. Plenty of them. Before I go out, I write my telephone number a half a dozen times on bits of paper and put them in my pocket. If I see a beautiful girl I like I hand her one and say, 'If you're not going to get married in the next ten years, give us a ring.' I do it in marathons, too. When I'm running along and I pass a fantastic girl, I give her one of my bits of paper and say, 'If you want to come training with me, here's the number. I might get a couple of phone calls...It doesn't mean I expect girls who ring me to jump into bed with me. But I don't live like a monk. I have a busy sex life."

It should come as no surprise that given his lifestyle, Savile said that more than anything else in the world, he prized "ultimate freedom" the most. Unfortunately, many of those who knew him bore the brunt of his "ultimate freedom." Others, namely the corpses he molested, never knew anything about such expressions.

BBC and the Catholic Church

As someone who has written extensively on the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, it is easy to draw parallels between what happened at the BBC and what occurred in the Church. The investigations, the offenders, the culture inside and outside the organizations, the reaction of senior officials, the media response—they all yield striking similarities, as well as significant dissimilarities.

The most authoritative studies on priestly sexual abuse in the U.S. have been done by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Both are scrupulously independent of the Church, and have yielded important data.

These research institutions conducted their work in a manner that was quite dissimilar from the BBC report: their findings were not restricted to interviews. Indeed, much of their data collection was drawn from internal documents. Critically, unlike Dame Janet Smith, the researchers took into account unsubstantiated accusations made over decades—they did not take a highly restrictive approach. They were also trained in the social sciences, not law.

This is not to say that the work of the U.S. researchers was dispositive and that Smith's effort was sophomoric. That would be untrue. But it is to say that if they had settled on the research limitations that mark Smith's work, they would have produced a picture of priestly misconduct that was far less dramatic than what they offered.

At the outset, let it be said that it is not possible to compare thousands of priests to one man. But this much can be said: less than 5 percent of the abusing priests, as determined by the John Jay researchers, were pedophiles. We know that 100 percent of the victimizers were male, as were 81 percent of their victims. Overall, 78 percent of the victims were

postpubescent, meaning that homosexuality was involved in the lion's share of abuse. Savile, we know, liked to abuse mostly young girls, though he did not discriminate on the basis of age or sex. His necrophilia also made him unique.

When it comes to understanding the culture that promoted the likes of Savile and molesting priests, there are some apt parallels. Ditto for why their superiors did not act responsibly.

In the 1960s, the dominant culture in England and the U.S. witnessed a radical break with the culture of the 1950s: there was a profound shift from sexual reticence to sexual license. Not to be misunderstood, the culture did not cause most men to abuse, but it certainly gave the most depraved among them no reason to slam on their brakes. "Tolerance" was all the rage, including tolerance for sexual deviance. This allowed those in positions of authority to look the other way when complaints surfaced. It wasn't hip, so they reasoned, to make "value judgments," save for the judgment that values matter little.

In the case of the Catholic Church, psychologists and psychiatrists convinced the bishops that they possessed enormous powers to alter the behavior of offending priests. It was part of the zeitgeist that anyone could be rehabilitated, and that the experts could do the job. They failed miserably. If they had been lawyers, they would have been disbarred.

Regarding culpability, if Smith's contention that *no one* at the top of the BBC ever heard about Savile's decades-long history of rape is true—much of it occurring on the BBC's premises—then why should we believe that the pope knew about molesting priests half-way around the world? After all, the BBC is tiny compared to the Vatican.

BBC senior management oversee approximately 23,000 workers; the pope oversees more than 5,000 bishops, 416,000 priests, 40,000 deacons, 54,500 non-ordained male religious; 683,000 female religious; and

117,000 seminarians. They work in 3,000 dioceses serving 1.27 billion members in 220,000 parishes in every part of the globe.

Most disturbing about all of this is the BBC's utter duplicity: It has a long record of trashing popes for the behavior of abusing priests all over the world, claiming they knew about cases from Texas to Tanzania. Yet we are to believe that none of the BBC top officials knew anything about a serial rapist serving under them for decades. The BBC cannot have it both ways.

BBC Indicts "The Church"

Before delving into specific BBC documentaries on the Vatican, there is one aspect that is common to all of them that must be addressed: the reification of the Catholic Church and the way it affects perceptions of wrongdoing.

Reification is the concretization of abstract concepts. For example, we all know what "conscience" means, though none of us have seen it. It is a useful concept, but it can be misused: if we cast it as something tangible, we do a disservice to its common meaning. Similarly, when someone says he is suing "New York City," it is a mistake to reify it by treating it as if it has an existence of its own. It does not. There is no "city" that pays a fine—taxpayers do.

Why mention this? At one level there is no such thing as the Catholic Church—no one has ever seen it. What we see are men, women, and children who share common beliefs and practices, some of whom—the leaders—act and dress differently. That being the case, we should be careful not to reify it: when we concretize it, we distort its utility.

Here is how it works in real life. The BBC's reports and documentaries constantly speak of "the Church" when discussing culpability. But "the

Church" cannot be prosecuted: individuals can. "The Church" is not some animate object subject to accountability. It is one thing to say that Bishop Donohue failed to act properly—he can be held accountable—but it is quite another to say that "the Church" failed to act properly. Who is the Church?

To be sure, the BBC is hardly alone in playing this game, but they do it all the time. The reification of the Catholic Church is not an accident: its purpose is to invite the public to generically assign guilt to those at the top without ever providing details.

Steeple-chasing lawyers do this more than anyone. When asked to name who is ultimately responsible for a priest's misconduct, they say "the Church." And they get away with it. Why don't they name names? Because it is so much easier to simply blame "the Church."

It should be noted, too, that the reification game is rigged one way. For example, when a priest, or a pope, does something heroic—like saving Jews during the Holocaust—we never hear how "the Church" acted meritoriously: we hear how a specific priest or pope acted. The rules are easy to figure out: collectivize guilt and individualize merit. It works, but it is intellectually dishonest.

BBC Reports and Documentaries

The BBC has produced several reports and documentaries on priestly sexual abuse, holding Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI culpable for what happened. The evidence, as we shall see, is speculative at best and non-existent at worst. Which explains the utility of blaming "the Church." It's a convenient default option.

"Suing the Pope" was a 2002 documentary about Colm O'Gorman. He says he was raped by a priest when he was 14 and that it lasted for a few

years. He told no one about it until 1995, when he was 29. Did "the Church" ignore his story? Not at all. The accused priest was arrested that same year; he committed suicide four years later. An admission of negligence and payment for damages was forthcoming, but O'Gorman wasn't satisfied: he sued the bishop, the Papal Nuncio, and Pope John Paul II. Obviously, O'Gorman got nowhere, but that he would even try to pin this on the pope speaks volumes about his agenda.

The BBC documentary was not simply about O'Gorman—he was hired to produce it. Of course, none of Savile's many victims would ever be given the chance to produce a BBC documentary detailing what happened to them. Worse, BBC officials spiked a "Newsnight" report on Savile's conduct after the icon died, so determined were they to protect their image. The Vatican's image, however, is a different story.

The BBC was so happy with O'Gorman's self-documentary that he was assigned another project, the result of which was the 2006 documentary, "Sex Crimes and the Vatican." It was a hit job on Pope Benedict XVI, as well as on the Vatican as a whole. This was followed in 2010 by another Panorama program, "What the Pope Knew"; it also smeared Benedict (O'Gorman was not involved in this one).

As will become evident, much of the information in both documentaries was either misleading or bogus.

"Sex Crimes and the Vatican" contended that in 2001, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (he became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005), issued a "secret Vatican edict" ordering bishops around the world to put the interests of the Church ahead of the welfare of the victims of priestly sexual abuse. According to the BBC documentary, bishops were expected to encourage victims to keep quiet. The 2001 report was said to be an updated version of the 1962 document, "Crimen Sollicitationis" (the Crime of Solicitation).

I read these documents, wrote about them, and discussed them on television. What the BBC, and others, said about them is a total falsehood (CBS was the worst in the U.S.). They manifestly do not reveal an attempt by the Vatican to put the interests of the Church above the interests of victims, nor do they represent an attempt to silence anyone. No wonder so many bishops in the U.K. reacted so strongly against the documentary's lies. The distortions are many.

First, the 1962 document did not apply to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation. Second, the only venue that was addressed was the confessional. Third, because the policy was specifically aimed at protecting the secrecy of the confessional, it called for an ecclesiastical response: civil authorities were not to be notified because it involved a sacrament of the Catholic Church, not a crime of the state.

Fourth, if a priest were found guilty, he could be thrown out of the priesthood. Fifth, if the penitent were to tell someone what happened (perhaps another priest), he or she had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. If anything, this proves how serious the Vatican was about an offense—it threatened to punish the penitent *for not turning in the guilty priest*. Sixth, the 1962 document was superseded by the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the norms established in 2001 for dealing with serious crimes involving the sacraments.

In 2006, the Most Rev. Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Birmingham and chairman of the office that handles the sexual abuse of minors, called the BBC documentary "false and misleading," saying it "confuses the misuse of the confessional and the immoral attempts by a priest to silence his victim." He added that the 2001 document "clarified the law of the Church, ensuring that the Vatican is informed of every case of child abuse and that each case is dealt with properly." The British archbishop was right on both counts.

In March 2010, the BBC ran a story, "Pope Accused of Failing to Act on Sex Abuse Case." Taking the side of the accusers, the BBC blamed

Cardinal Ratzinger for ignoring pleas by the victims of Milwaukee priest Fr. Lawrence Murphy. No one doubts that Murphy was wicked: he abused as many as 200 deaf boys extending back to the 1950s. What can be contested—indeed refuted—is the charge that Ratzinger bore some of the blame.

Though Murphy's crimes took place in the 1950s, none of the victims' families contacted the civil authorities until the mid-1970s. After a police investigation, the case was dropped. Fast forward to 1996—that was the first time the Vatican learned of the case. Cardinal Ratzinger, who was in charge of the office that was contacted, could have simply dropped the case given that the statute of limitations had expired. But he didn't: he ordered an investigation. While the inquiry was proceeding, Murphy died.

There is no evidence that Ratzinger knew of Murphy's predatory behavior before 1996. Indeed, Fr. Thomas Brundage, the judicial vicar for the Milwaukee Archdiocese who presided over the Murphy trial from 1996-1998, plainly stated Ratzinger's innocence. "At no time in the case, at meetings I had at the Vatican, in Washington, D.C. and in Milwaukee," he said, "was Cardinal Ratzinger's name ever mentioned."

If anyone was to blame for not contacting the Vatican it was Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland; he took over the archdiocese in 1977. He waited almost two decades to do so. Though Weakland publicly stated that he had only learned of the Murphy case in 1996, this was not true. In a letter from the Coadjutor Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin, Raphael M. Fliss, to the Vicar for Personnel of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Fr. Joseph A. Janicki, he said, "In a recent conversation with Archbishop Weakland, I was left with the impression that it would not be advisable at this time to invite Father Murphy to return to Milwaukee to work among the deaf." The letter was dated July 9, 1980.

Why didn't the BBC, and media outlets in the U.S., probe Weakland's culpability? Because unlike Cardinal Ratzinger, the Milwaukee

Archbishop was known for championing progressive causes. He had to resign when his lover, a 53-year-old man, revealed that Weakland paid him \$450,000 to settle a sexual assault lawsuit (the money was taken from the archdiocese).

"What the Pope Knew" was a two-part story that aired in September 2010, just days before Pope Benedict XVI arrived in England. The documentary tried to tag him with irresponsibility for his handling of cases in the U.S. and Germany. Professed enemies of the Church in the U.S., such as Minnesota lawyer Jeffrey Anderson, were interviewed; they were allowed to make the most sweeping and unsupportable comments imaginable, without being challenged. The show focused on two priests: Fr. Stephen Kiesle of California, and Germany's Fr. Peter Hullermann.

In 1978, Fr. Kiesle was convicted of sexually abusing two boys and was suspended by his local church. His superior, Bishop John Cummins, wanted him defrocked in 1981, but the Vatican wanted more information. Cardinal Ratzinger had taken over the office in charge of these matters only a week before the Vatican made its ruling. Following Church norms at the time—the BBC makes this sound conspiratorial—Ratzinger said he could not defrock Kiesle because no one under 40 could be laicized, and the priest was in his thirties. Kiesle could have been ordered to stand trial, but because he was so close to 40, a decision was made to wait. On February 13, 1987, the day before Kiesle's 40th birthday, he was defrocked.

It is important to note that Kiesle was removed from ministry following his conviction, and that in 1982, while still technically a priest, Kiesle married the mother of a girl he had abused in 1973. But to mention this fact would be to shift blame away from the pope, and that is not something that would fit with the BBC's narrative.

The BBC also criticized Cardinal Ratzinger's handling of Fr. Peter Hullermann, a priest who was convicted of sexually abusing boys while serving in Grafting, Germany. After his conviction, he was transferred to

Munich for therapy. At the time, therapy was the preferred method for dealing with abusers; this was true everywhere in the Western world. Once the therapy sessions ended, and Hullermann was certified as good to go, he was placed in a new parish.

How much did Archbishop Ratzinger know about Hullermann's case? It was his deputy who placed Hullermann in the new parish and who knew of the details of his case. From accounts published by the *New York Times*, we know that Ratzinger's office "was copied on a memo" about the transfer. But we also know from Church officials that sending memos was routine, and that they were "unlikely to have landed on the archbishop's desk."

Conclusion

If there is one BBC official who figures prominently in both the Savile case and the BBC's documentaries on the Catholic Church, it is Mark Thompson. He was Director General from 2004-2012, and he claims he never heard about Savile's record of abuse while working there. He was also in charge of the BBC when it aired stories alleging that the hierarchy of the Catholic Church knew about abusive priests all over the world. He left his top post at the BBC in 2012 for another top post: he became president of the *New York Times Company*.

Regrettably, Dame Janet Smith rarely mentions Thompson in her lengthy report. But she does quote him as saying, on the day Savile died, October 29, 2011, "we shall miss him greatly." Both men worked at the BBC for decades, but all Thompson knew about him, he says, is that he was a great entertainer.

If Thompson didn't know about Savile's sordid past when he died, which is implausible, he certainly knew before the end of the year. He conceded that he was told at the 2011 Christmas party that the BBC decided not to

run the "Newsnight" exposé on him. He didn't have much choice: BBC reporter Caroline Hawley bared the truth. In addition, Thompson was given many daily news clips about Savile, but he says he never read any of them.

On October 10, 2012, the chairman of the BBC Trust, Lord Chris Patten, spoke about the role that BBC officials, including Thompson, played in the decision to stop the BBC report on Savile. He said they "all knew there was an investigation and did not intervene to stop it." But then something strange happened: Lord Patten's office subsequently put out a statement saying that he "misspoke." Tory MP Sir Roger Gale responded by saying that Lord Patten must go.

Even if we grant Thompson the benefit of the doubt on these matters, he did one thing before he left the BBC for his *New York Times* job that cannot be ignored. Thompson authorized his lawyers to write a letter to *The Sunday Times* in London threatening to sue if they decided to publish a detailed article about Savile. Unavoidably, the letter summarized the accusations against him, thus undercutting Thompson's claim that he never even heard about Savile's sex crimes while he was at the BBC.

So what did Thompson say when questioned about this? He said he never read the letter—the same letter whose content he authorized! Thompson then refused any further interviews, even turning down the *New York Times*. To top things off, his personal advisor said of the letter, "It's not clear if he was shown it, but he doesn't remember reading it."

Lying. Covering up. Isn't this what the BBC accuses the Vatican of doing? To be sure, high-ranking clergy in some dioceses did lie and cover up, but to believe that Thompson and other senior BBC officials didn't know about Jimmy Savile, but the pope and his staff knew about abusing priests half-way around the world, is too much to swallow.

The BBC got off easy with Smith's report; conversely, the BBC's treatment of the Church was unfair.