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The Vatican is desperate to rehabilitate its reputation. And well it might be. The past two years has seen one scandal after another come knocking on Benedict's door.

The child abuse crisis is, of course, the worst of them. Tens of thousands of children have been casually used and abused by Catholic priests around the world. The scale of this horrific sexual exploitation is only now becoming apparent. There are few checks and balances in the developing world, so there is little knowledge yet of the scale of abuse there.

Last week, the chapter of the Ryan Report that had been suppressed pending a court case was published. It revealed yet again a catalogue of deliberate and carefully orchestrated cover ups by the Church, both locally and in the Vatican. Children who might have been spared the trauma of sexual abuse were sacrificed in order that the Church could spare itself further criticism.

Yet another report about abuse in the diocese of Cloyne has been presented to the Irish Government, and soon there will be another extensive list of victims and another account of the Vatican's contempt for them.

But it is not only child abuse that the Pope should be made to answer for. The [Vatican bank is under investigation](#) (again) for money laundering. It is a bank that is excused the regulation that any other bank is bound to observe. But there are strong suspicions that it is hand in glove with the mafia.

Last week [we revealed](#) that the Vatican is in negotiation with Belarus over the signing of a pact that will give the Catholic Church numerous privileges in that country. A country that is, at present, ruled with an iron fist by "Europe's last dictator", the despotic Alexander Lukashenka who has now gained the nickname "Europe's Mugabe".

He fixes elections, jails opponents and suppresses dissent with ruthless violence. Just the sort of man the Vatican likes to do business with. Just as it did with Hitler. And it is still enjoying the fruits of that concordat, with millions of euros flowing into the Vatican's coffers from the German taxpayer. Similarly with the concordats it signed with Mussolini in Italy, with the tyrannical Franco in Spain and his counterpart Salazar in Portugal. And with just about every foul dictator that has infested South America.

Why is this never questioned?

And now we have to ask about the Vatican's relationship with the BBC. What is going on here?

In September the BBC committed huge resources and much air time to covering the Pope's visit to Britain. Opinion polls showed the British public to be massively indifferent to the visit and yet a huge, fawning, over-the-top propaganda exercise was mounted by the Corporation to ensure that the Pope had a clear run. No difficult questions were asked, no awkward commentators were

allowed to appear and a completely skewed and, when looked at objectively, ridiculous, exercise in whitewashing was achieved.

Now the Pope follows up this little coup with another as he gains access to the unquestioned, unchallengeable Thought for the Day slot. Who knows what he will say – whether he will renew his attack on secularism (with no opportunity for secularists to answer back) or whether his target will be gay people or the equality laws or the rights of women to control their own fertility.

Why is the BBC doing this? Could it possibly be the work of the Director General Mark Thompson who personally negotiated the coverage of the Pope's visit while at the Vatican? Mr Thompson is a high-ranking Catholic. He would be a very useful feather in the Pope's hat. Let us hope that is not what Mr Thompson is.

But if we next hear that he has been awarded a papal medal for services to the Vatican, we will know precisely what it is for.

See also:

[The BBC has disgraced itself with Pope's Thought for the Day](#)

[More blatant religious propaganda from the BBC](#)

- [Pope Thought: extraordinarily bad choice \(NSS on R4 Today Programme, Xmas Eve\)](#) (MP3 Audio, 5:57, 5.5 Mb)