



# The Case of the Pope: Vatican Accountability for Human Rights Abuse

*Geoffrey Robertson*

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**The Case of the Pope: Vatican Accountability for Human Rights Abuse** Geoffrey Robertson  
**In *The Case of the Pope* Geoffrey Robertson QC delivers a devastating indictment of the way the Vatican has run a secret legal system that shields paedophile priests from criminal trial around the world.**

Is the Pope morally or legally responsible for the negligence that has allowed so many terrible crimes to go unpunished? Should he and his seat of power, the Holy See, continue to enjoy an immunity that places them above the law?

Geoffrey Robertson QC, a distinguished human rights lawyer and judge, evinces a deep respect for the good works of Catholics and their church. But, he argues, unless Pope Benedict XVI can divest himself of the beguilements of statehood and devotion to obsolescent canon law, the Vatican will remain a serious enemy to the advance of human rights.

'Robertson is an adept QC and this is a devastating case'

*Daily Telegraph*

'Combines moral passion with steely forensic precision ... It is one of the most formidable demolition jobs one could imagine on a man who has done more to discredit the cause of religion than Rasputin and Pat Robertson put together'

Terry Eagleton, *Guardian*

'Forceful, wide-ranging'

*The Tablet*

'Robertson has not become a successful lawyer by muddling his arguments and distorting his facts ... He writes clearly, at times passionately, as counsel for the prosecution'

John Lloyd, *Financial Times*

**Geoffrey Robertson QC** is founder and head of Doughty Street Chambers, the largest human rights practice in the UK. In 2008, he was appointed as a distinguished jurist member of the UN Justice Council. His books include *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*, a memoir, *The Justice Game* and *The Tyrannicide Brief*, an award winning study of the trial of Charles I.

## The Case of the Pope: Vatican Accountability for Human Rights Abuse Details

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Abuse Geoffrey Robertson**

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## **From Reader Review The Case of the Pope: Vatican Accountability for Human Rights Abuse for online ebook**

### **Rob says**

Wow, talk about damning. This is an extremely well-argued case by one of the preeminent international law scholars of our time. He manages to separate the religion from the actions of its leaders, resulting in a powerful, yet respectful, piece of work.

One of the biggest surprises to me is the ticking time bomb that is the church's actions in South America and Africa, which remain largely a mystery. When you live in the US or UK, you tend to think that the problem is being addressed everywhere. Well, it is not.

Oh, and the deposition transcript included at the end is enough to make you want to hit someone. Required reading for Catholics.

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### **Matt Kelly says**

A well researched case-study of the Human Rights abuse of the Catholic Church. Deserves to be widely read by all who are interested in Human Rights and also by anyone who is a Catholic wanting to know how their leaders conduct themselves.

I hope this book causes revolution, and hopefully the next pope can directly confront these issues and set a course for the church to be the church.

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### **Christina says**

An excellent argument for why Benedict should be tried in international court. It will never happen, of course, but a great read nonetheless. The legalities could be a bit dull from time to time, but were necessary to understand the overall point.

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### **Joey Comeau says**

There are so many things that happen in this world that seem so completely and obviously wrong, and yet which go unpunished. They are exposed and still nobody answers for them. It is enough to make a person feel crazy. Am I so biased that what seems obvious and self-evident to me (child abuse is wrong - covering up child abuse is wrong) is really a morally and legally ambiguous grey area?

This book made me so angry at the pope that I actually threw it across the room one night.

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## Shaunc says

Robertson's title is a little misleading as it is just as much about the Vatican and the power structures as it is Pope Benny. But Robertson does an excellent job in marshalling his legal voodoo and applying it to the issue of sexual abuse by priests in the Catholic Church. He goes astray here and there (most grievously in supporting scuttlebutt that Pope John Paul the First was poisoned) but for the most part, he constructs a solid indictment against the Catholic Church and Pope Benny (when he was head of the CDF) for being culpable in not responding quickly or correctly to allegations of child sexual abuse in the church.

Contrary to how it was reported in the press, Robertson does not call for the arrest of the Pope but suggests changes that would allow proper handling of the cases and that would give the victims justice oft denied by the secrecy and out of touch and stagnant bureaucracy of the Catholic Church.

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## Doug says

A very level headed and unbiased exploration of the facts concerning the Catholic Church's turning a blind eye to and then covering up paedophilia by its priests on children by a British QC and judge. There is no emotion in this book, just facts, and the author goes on to explore whether the Pope has a case to answer in court.

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## Steve Mitchell says

This book is an indictment of the handling of the child abuse scandal within the Catholic church and the Vatican's – and Pope Benedict XVI's contribution as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith before he was elected to the Papacy – in covering up the allegations and obstructing the criminal justice system in the countries that abuse occurred.

Geoffrey Robertson QC is not a fundamentalist atheist with an axe to grind against the Catholic Church: this book contains an attack upon the absurd sensationalist headlines of the tabloid press in the 'bid to have the Pope arrested', as well as Robertson defending many Catholic groups and individuals in his capacity as one of the world's foremost human rights lawyers. He takes care to express the many good works that the Catholic Church carries out around the world in the name of charity for instance. Neither does he agree that the moral outrage expressed in the tabloid press that all paedophiles must be vilified and demonised, and imprisoned for long spells under all circumstances; again Robertson has defended paedophiles in his capacity as a lawyer and expresses the view that some are more in need of treatment and understanding first and punishment as a secondary aspect of their crimes.

What this book does show is that as Cardinal Ratzinger - and then as Benedict XVI – the current Pope was complicit at every stage in preventing incidences of child abuse from coming to light and preventing criminal action being taken against the Catholic clergy that committed these acts. It is a very well written and thought provoking tract that – with the exception of the appendices – does not descend into legal jargon that those of us without a law degree would find difficult to follow.

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## Jamie Makin says

Robertson demolishes, one-by-one, the defences the Vatican have used to excuse themselves from the

charges of abetting child-rape over the years with controlled and pin-pointed anger throughout. Although there are legal questions raised and answered throughout it never becomes too complex to follow and as a whole constructs a thorough run through of the scandal, dealing with it in detail from 2002 onwards. The level of the crimes, and of their cover-ups, are staggering in their almost Kafkaesque awfulness to the point that Robertson's wry humour creeps in as the only way left to respond to the pure lunacy of the catholic church.

At its heart, this report shows what can happen when worldly and ecumenical powers collide and muddy each other. A problem that is as old as religion itself. Maybe it is a good sign that this type of corruption is no longer being ignored and that no authority is now above question and the law. Enough is finally enough.

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### **Daniel says**

This is by no means an enjoyable read. The prose is not elegant, the points are without humor; Robertson takes his task very seriously. The Case of the Pope addresses a horrifying problem in our world, and you will likely find yourself angry that so little has been done to address it. But make no mistake that, by the time you finish this, you will understand the priests who commit the crimes, the efforts by the Holy See to ensure they go unpunished, and why it has no right to do so. At times, the book may seem repetitive, covering what may seem to be the same point multiple times. But it becomes apparent that every paragraph addresses a specific facet of this complicated mess. I found the discussion of the definition of a state to be enlightening, even irrespective of its massive importance to the case at hand. Though I may have been put off by it, I would consider this to be a strength of this book: The religious beliefs of Catholicism are entirely left alone. No criticism is made of them. It is the Vatican that is on trial. Overall it is comprehensive, the arguments are airtight. Anyone interested in sex abuse in the church should absolutely read this, and every citizen of the world should be very concerned about sex abuse.

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### **James Purkis Purkis says**

This is a devastating critique of the Church and cannot be ignored by any Catholic or person interested in the current child abuse crisis. Robertson has the rare ability of taking complex legal ideas and making them accessible and relevant to non-lawyers. Importantly, he explodes the arguments the Church has put up about protecting priests and shows conclusively that they ensure NO ONE, including the victims, is allowed to speak to the relevant authorities, such as the police, and that the Church continues to allow the offending priests to have access to children while not supporting the victims. As a Catholic I found this book harrowing as it has made me question what the Church actually stands for and whether any Catholic can in good conscience continue to defend this corrupt and morally bankrupt institution.

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### **Derek Walsh says**

The legal case for putting Joseph Ratzinger on trial for his part in covering up and enabling the systematic rape of children, this excellent book demolishes the Vatican's audacious claim to statehood and makes a case as to why the pope should be brought to justice.

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## Andrew Gaulke says

Things you will learn from this book:

What is the catholic child abuse scandal, how big is it, and what has been the catholic churches response to it?

Is the Vatican legally accountable, is it a state, and if it was does that give it immunity?

How are the abusive preists getting away with it, what is cannon law, and how does it protect them?

In my view, no one can claim to be literate on these questions until they have read this book. The history of the scandal is laid out cogently and clearly, as well as the popes continual obfuscation and the media manipulation that tried to continue the cover up even once it was exposed.

The process of the cover up, and the hypocrisies of canon law, that allows an admission of pedophilia as an air tight defense, restrains everyone involved in the farcical process to "perpetual silence" on threat of excommunication, and has said excommunication as it's worst possible punishment, almost never given except to those who expose the rapists to the law, these are shown to be only an obscene parody of law. Robertson shows how the Vatican has claimed that this is the only law to which preists should be subject, and shows us why this isn't a law at all in any meaningful seanse.

Robbertson then gives us the history of the vatican as a sovereign state, and shows why it does not fullfill the requirements of statehood under international law, as well as how it has used it's pretense of statehood to retard the fight for human rights, especially for women and sexual minorities, throughout the world.

The legal sections occasionally get bogged down in acronyms and references, but the book still remains remarkably clear in it's analysis and the narrative it builds around the events of the scandal.

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## Cheyenne Blue says

This isn't something you read swiftly - I had a novel on the go as well, and I'd pick this up and read a few pages at a time. Robertson sets out factually and unemotionally that Pope Ratarse should be tried for crimes against humanity because of his knowledge and cover-up of the child sex abuse perpetuated by priests. It's in three parts: the first part smashes the argument that the pope is a head of state by proving that Vatican City does not meet the criteria for statehood. Then he lays out the extent of Ratarse's knowledge and coverup of the abuse, and finally argues that he can (and should) be tried for crimes against humanity. He limits his attacks to the pope and high figure in the holy see, and doesn't attack the catholic church per se or catholics.

Very readable, very anger-making, and yes, the bugger should be tried and imprisoned.

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## Julie says

So far-very enlightening! Geoffrey Robertson QC leaves no holy stone unturned as he removes (painstakingly, at times) any lingering doubts your mind might be harbouring that the current pontiff is innocent of covering up serious crimes against innocent children. He is involved to a disturbing degree. All Catholics should do themselves a favour and open their minds with this reality check.

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## **Paul says**

Forensic analysis of the controversy surrounding the Vatican's lack of action over child abuse within the Catholic Church and Ratzinger's responsibility in it all. Full of detail on this, and the flimsy justification for the Pope's immunity from prosecution as a head of state (as explained in the book "statehood" a result of a treaty between the church and Mussolini for domestic Italian reasons, and the use the church makes of this to gain a voice on UN decision-making. Summed up nicely with a pre-papal quote from Ratzinger himself - "The Christian believer is a simple person: bishops should protect the faith of their little people against the power of intellectuals". Hmmm.

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