

Jehovah's Witnesses answer

to accusations in the program 'Mission-Investigate'

In a segment of the television program "Mission-Investigate" of the April 8, 2003, Jehovah's Witnesses were accused of "protecting pedophiles".

The program described among others a specific case where an individual, a 26 year old man, unfortunately was sexually abused in his childhood. It was introduced as a case of pedophilia, which is defined as an adult person involved with molestation of a child. This story was, like other statements in the program, both misleading and deceptive for the following reasons:

- * **FACT Both persons involved were children (approximately 8 and 4 years of age) when the sexual acts between them started, around 1980, they were both still underage (approximately 14 and 10 years of age) when the sexual acts stopped in 1987.**
- * **FACT The sexual acts between the boys started five years before any of their parents became Jehovah's Witnesses. The sexual acts stopped before any of the boys became members of the congregation in the autumn of 1988 and spring of 1991.**
- * **FACT In 1996, after the boys and their parents had been Jehovah's Witnesses for some years, the elders in the congregation were informed about the sexual acts that had been committed in the past. The families decided not to report the case to the social or legal authorities. The elders respected the wishes of the involved families.**
- * **FACT The older boy has never served as an elder or traveling overseer in any of the congregations of the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses.**

Television viewers that value justice and fairness have appreciated being provided this important information. We are dismayed that those who produce "Mission-Investigate" omit these and other pertinent facts. Our members and sympathizers are deeply insulted, over the fact that misinformation is being used to try and associate Jehovah's Witnesses with sexual molestation of children. We will therefore take whatever legal actions necessary to stop these false allegations.

Our guidelines concerning sexual abuse against children are well-founded and have support in the Bible. A person in a position of responsibility in the congregation that is found guilty of sexual abuse against children will be removed from his position.

(1 Tim 3:1, 2) All Jehovah's Witnesses are expected to live according to the high standards found in the Bible, which means to be clean in a physical, mental, moral and spiritual respect. (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph 4:17-19; 1 Thess 2:4)

Swedish law does not demand priest or ministers in a religious community to report sexual molestation of a child. Our organization however has always accepted that the victim, the victim's family or close adult relatives or whoever who knows a case of child abuse have the absolute right to report it.

Jehovah's Witnesses April 30, 2003
Chairman Branch Committee *Bengt Hanson*

WATCHTOWER

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Jehovah's Witnesses abhor sexual abuse of children. We love our children. It is of great importance for us that the children are safe and protected. We handle this with the greatest seriousness.

The Actual Facts

In the program "Mission-Investigate" there were five separate cases of abuse as follows:

- Elder abusing minor boys. He forces them among other things to have oral sex. He was found guilty in a court of law. He also confesses his crime. In the documents from the court it is written that the congregation was aware of the problem for five years previous to the conviction.
- Ministerial servant molesting his two stepdaughters. The elders convince them not to report to the police. He was removed from his position in the congregation, but not disfellowshipped.
- Elder molesting a fourteen year old mentally handicapped girl. The school where she attends reports it to the police, he confesses in a police investigation. He is removed from his position as an elder, but not disfellowshipped. (According to the report from social services he also molested at least two other children)
- Elder confesses on the television program that he has sexual assaulted a thirteen year old girl. Four additional witnesses come forward to say he also molested them. This elder serves as a sub CO and special pioneer.

None of the above cases were mentioned in the letter from Watchtower that went to all congregations and media in Sweden .

Regarding the 26 year old mentioned, Anders, his sister Johanna, was also molested but not mentioned in the letter from Watchtower.

What are the true "**facts**"

Fact - There was two brothers that were molesting multiple children in the congregation. The oldest of them was born in 1973.

Fact - Anders was born 1977 and molested first by the older brother. It is correct the molestation started when they where both minor, but the abuse was not stopped until Anders was fourteen years of age and the molester was eighteen years of age in 1991. The molester was baptized in 1988. In Sweden molestation is considered an adult crime starting at age fifteen.

Fact - In addition to Anders the older brother molested at least four other children. This included Anders sister Johanna, who is six years younger than the molester. The abuse of Johanna stopped when she was twelve in 1991.

Fact - Anders mother and the mother of the molesters were baptized 1985 and both fathers shortly thereafter. The molestations continued while both parents were members of the congregation, and more than two years after the older molester was baptized.

Fact - The younger of the two brothers was molesting children all up to mid nineties, when everything was revealed. The younger brother was then disfellowshipped and the older brother, who was a ministerial servant, and serving at Bethel in Sweden , was removed from his position and dismissed from the bethel family. He was privately reproved and instructed to apologize to Anders and his family.

Fact - Anders parents urged the elders to let the two young men go to therapy, but the elders didn't think this was a good idea and of course the parents followed "theocratic direction".