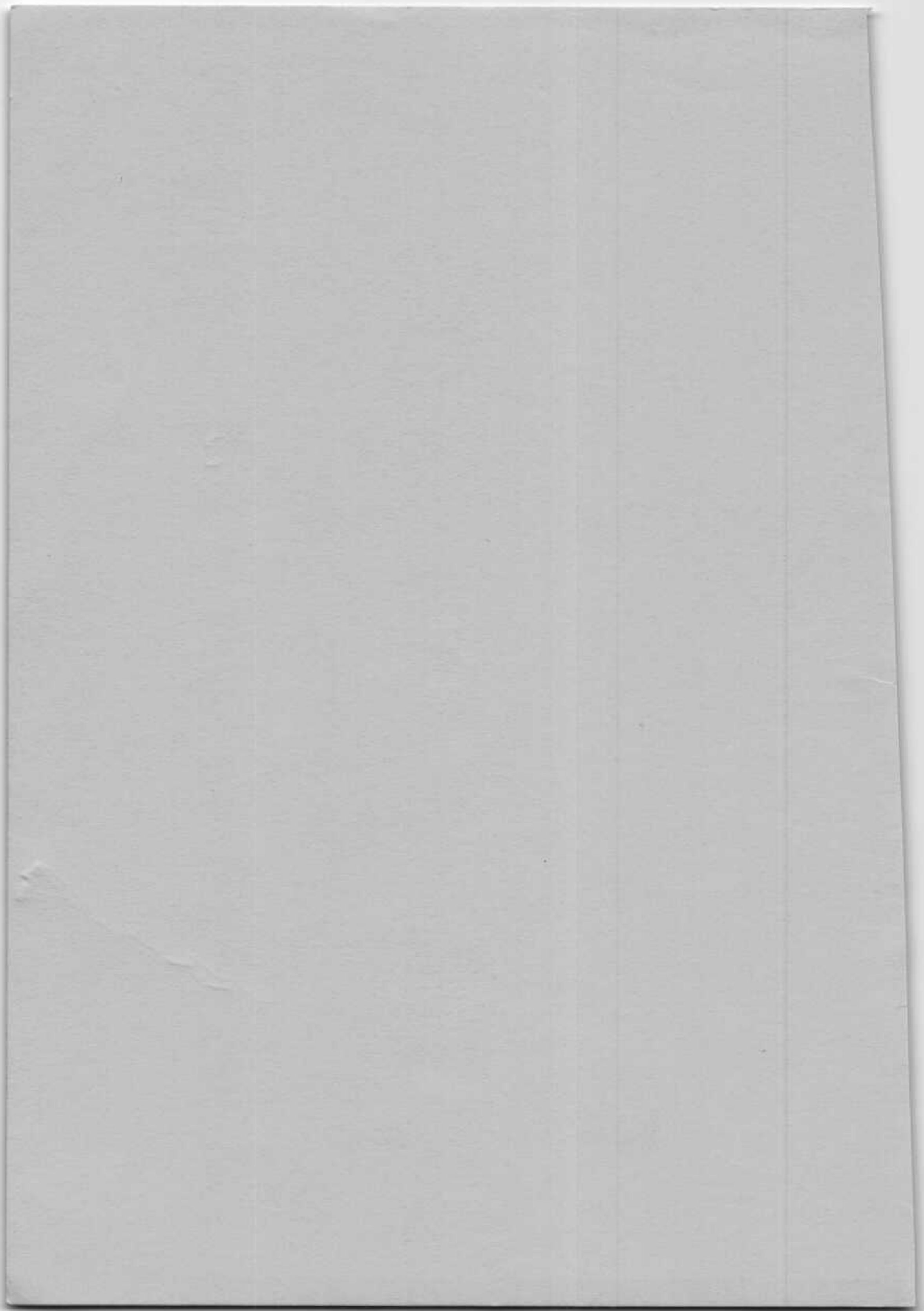


Misunderstood Intimacy

A Pastoral Approach to Pedophilia

KSA



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Stichting voor Kerkelijk Sociale Arbeid

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1999

Misunderstood Intimacy: A Pastoral Approach to Pedophilia
Edited by Hans Visser and D.H. Mader

This booklet is intended to make available in English various documents dealing with pedophilia which originated with the Pauluskerk/KSA, its director or staff, or which are referred to in these documents. Documents I-VI, IX and X may be reprinted in whole or in part, on the condition that full acknowledgement is made of this publication, and the original Dutch sources if applicable. Except for brief citations for review or scholarly purposes, no parts of Documents VII and VIII may be reproduced without permission of the translator (VII) or original copyright holder (VIII).

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Introduction

In August, 1999, the Pauluskerk began receiving mail from the United States requesting further information on its statements on pedophilia. Research indicated that an internet site on girl-love had without our knowledge placed a translation of remarks made by the Rev. Hans Visser, pastor of the church, out on the web; from there it had been reposted at various sites on religion and sexuality, and finally reprinted in a newsletter sent to men imprisoned for pedophile offenses. This booklet is intended to both provide a full and fair picture of what the position of the Pauluskerk is, and to make available all of the material in English in a handy format to meet requests for this information. The initial text which began this process is reprinted here as Document IV.

The Pauluskerk (St. Paul's Church), a parish of the Netherlands Reformed Church, is located about a block and a half from the railroad station in Rotterdam, an industrial and commercial city and the world's busiest port, with about one million people in its metropolitan area. For the past twenty years the church, and the interdenominational Stichting voor Kerkelijk Sociale Arbeid (KSA = Foundation for church social work) associated with it, has sponsored and housed ministries with drug addicts, the homeless, refugees and illegal aliens - often overlapping populations found in the heart of most cities the size of Rotterdam. The Pauluskerk's early provision of a "toleration zone" where addicts could use drugs under sanitary conditions, with needle exchange and emergency help in case of overdose available, and its offering sanctuary to "illegal" aliens whose requests for asylum had been rejected by the authorities, have made the church and its work highly controversial. These ministries have however been even more controversial because it is the position of the church that part of its ministry to and with people must be not only providing assistance to them, but also advocating their cause at a political level, for instance in calls for decriminalization of drugs, or hospitable refugee policies. The testimony of the Pauluskerk over the past two decades that criminalization of drug users only adds to the miseries of already hugely damaged persons is now gradually being heard.

The Pauluskerk is less known for a fourth area of its ministry, that to sexual minorities. Initially this ministry centered on transvestites and transsexuals, at a time when counselling for them was almost nonexistent, and sex change operations illegal in other European

countries. From the mid-1980s Rev. Visser worked with Prof. Dr. Louis Gooren at the Free University in Amsterdam, a European pioneer in sex-change treatment, in providing support for persons, particularly those coming out of Christian backgrounds, considering such operations. As Document II indicates, this in turn led to his becoming involved with the problems of other sexual minorities. Presently the Pauluskerk provides confidential counselling for pedophiles (at a time when reporting rules make it inadvisable for a pedophile to go to other counselling services, which will turn his name over to the police), and also, as is its policy in its other ministries, speaks out against the hysterical persecution of pedophiles, advocating a more nuanced social and legal approach. It should be clear, however, that just as the Pauluskerk's position on drugs is not to advocate drug use, but to seek to eliminate a burden on drug users, the Pauluskerk does not advocate or support pedophile activity, and particularly not acts of sexual abuse, but seeks to nuance the present hysterical persecution of pedophiles as a sexual minority, and begin a dialogue with both them and society about what is truly abusive behavior, and how pedophile sexuality can be exercised responsibly and ethically. Considerable reflection of that will be found in these documents.

The key person in all the Pauluskerk's ministries is The Rev. Hans Visser (b. 1942), who has been pastor there since 1980. He is the author or editor of numerous books - two on urban ministry, two on theology, two collections of sermons, five in the field of drug and addiction policy, three on aspects of Christianity and sexuality (two of which are represented here: *Voor alles pastor*, a memorial volume for his colleague, Pastor Joseph Doucé, and *De andere kant van de medaille*, a collection of readings on pedophilia), and a literary diary of a year in his life and work, from which the first selection here comes. He has received both Dutch and international recognition for his work - in 1996 the Norman E. Zinberg Award from the Drug Policy Foundation in Washington D.C. for his work and ideas in the area of drug policy, and in 1999 the Peace Flame from the British Life Foundation; in The Netherlands he has received the Clara Wigman Medal for human rights work and, in Rotterdam, the Paul Nijgh Medal for services to improving life in the city.

Two general comments on the documents provided here are in order. First, some English-speaking readers will be unaccustomed to the constant use of the word 'pedophilia,' and the relative absence of any

mention of "boy lovers" and "girl-lovers." This is a distinctly European phenomenon, reaching back to the first use of the word in 1896 by Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, to signify those attracted to children irrespective of the sex of the child, whom he regarded as one coherent group; significantly, in the English-speaking world, although he did introduce the word 'pedophilia' to the English language in 1906, Havelock Ellis would continue to place the case histories of men attracted to young boys with those of other male "inverts" through all the editions of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, regarding them as a sub-group of homosexuals. In the 1960s and '70s this intellectual heritage became part of the political landscape, as groups like the Enclave Kring in The Netherlands sought to organize and provide services for pedophiles irrespective of the sex of their object of desire, while in North America groups like NAMBLA grew out of the early gay movement, though that movement has since disowned them. Whatever the merits - or lack thereof - of arguments that attraction to boys and to girls are two different phenomena, the use of terms here is simply a reflection of historical development.

Second, the letters we have received indicate that there is a profound misconception in North America that The Netherlands is a free and tolerant society with regard to pedophilia. This may to some extent reflect the fact that during the 1970s and early 1980s it was social policy here to tolerate the pedophile workgroups frequently mentioned in these documents, in the hope of reducing the isolation of pedophiles and, consequently, serious crimes against children. Since the mid-1980s this policy has been traded for increasingly vicious repression, and at present The Netherlands is arguably the most repressive country in the world with regard to pedophilia, with a total ban on possession of all images of children on the part of anyone suspected of pedophilia, indefinite "therapeutic" detention of convicted pedophiles after they have completed custodial sentences, and proposals presently before the parliament for a register of suspected pedophiles and chemical castration as a punishment for offenders. Public and media opinion is viciously anti-pedophile; this is visible in Document I as early as 1989, and 1999 has seen a long series of mob attacks around The Netherlands in which the homes of suspected "pedophiles" have been destroyed. That a church should be speaking out on pedophilia should not be understood as a sign of liberality or tolerance here; it is, rather, a sign of how desperate the situation here has become.

The first six documents translated and printed here are statements (five written and one in the form of an interview) by The Rev. Hans Visser, pastor of the Pauluskerk. There then follow two other translations of documents mentioned in the first six - a brochure from the Protestantse Stichting voor Verantwoorde Gezinsvorming (Protestant Foundation for Responsible Family Development), which had previously been translated and received very limited circulation in English in the early 1980s, and a section by The Rev. Alje Klamer, to whom Rev. Visser refers, from a handbook on pastoral counselling. In his piece Rev. Klamer begins some theological reflection on the basis and necessity for Christian ministry to pedophiles; this is continued in the next document, a sermon by The Rev. D.H. Mader, an assistant at the Pauluskerk responsible for English-speaking work and member of the church's sexuality committee. The last text is an internal document from within the Pauluskerk, in which Mr. Mader tries to answer various questions put by another staff member who was working on the preparation of *De andere kant van de medaille*. There is, finally, a reading list of English language sources on pedophilia, pedophiles, the children involved and societal attitudes, chosen for their objective approach.

For anyone who knows Dutch and wants to see the original sources, which also contain other chapters and articles not reproduced here, the two books *Voor alles pastor* and *De andere kant van de medaille* are available from the Pauluskerk/KSA at NLG 25,00/US\$ 15.00 each, including postage. As is customary with our publications, we invite you to direct your reactions to the Pauluskerk/KSA, Walenburgerweg 55, 3039 AD, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. We particularly welcome your constructive criticism.

(The Rev.) Hans Visser
Senior Pastor, Pauluskerk; Director, KSA

(The Rev.) D.H. Mader
Assistant, English language ministry

I. Op Drift

Two selections from *Op drift* (Adrift; Amsterdam: Balans, 1990; ISBN 90-5018-111-2), the Rev. Hans Visser's diary of a year in his life and work (during 1989-1990) at Rotterdam's Pauluskerk, an inner city church with special ministries to drug addicts, the homeless, sexual minorities and political refugees. Translated from Dutch by D.H. Mader.

Sunday, September 10

This afternoon a pedophile man phoned. He's been released from prison and returned home. But now he's besieged by neighborhood bullies shouting insults and throwing stones at his pets. He feels unsafe and wants to get a new place to live.

I made an appointment with him at the church, where I later meet him. I can easily help him to get a new roof over his head, but the more serious problem for him is where his life goes from there. He's not terribly bright, though very well meaning. He's crazy about kids, but has let himself be persuaded by equally well-meaning Christians that this is sinful.

I made it clear to him that pedophilia in itself is no sin and that he must learn to accept his nature. The only question is how he deals with it. One principle could be that you must never do things with a child that the child is not able to handle emotionally. But where do the boundaries lie?

Presently the man won't let himself have any contacts, not even to try to find out.

It always surprises me that society locks pedophiles up. It doesn't do a bit of good.

Wednesday, January 10

The life of a pedophile is very hard. I've had long conversations with M., who soon will have to appear in court for pedophile activities. For him, it's like bashing his head against a stone wall. He's already been punished. Three members of the family of the kid with whom he was involved already made a visit at night to "rearrange his face." He

also fears that he is facing a prison sentence. But there are also rays of hope. His employer has stood by him loyally. He's showing understanding for the situation and assures him that he can keep his job. He's now undergoing psychiatric examination at the request of the court. An extra complication is that the eight year old has told the police that the man put something in his glass of cola that knocked him out. The man totally denies this. The question is to what extent the boy made this accusation under pressure from his parents.

This is a case where a pedophile has to live with the consequences of his nature, right down to the lees. He understands that parents get extremely angry when he has sex with their children. He won't make excuses for that. But he asks himself how else he can live with this nature. Right now things are o.k., but soon?

II. Warmhearted Clergyman: There is still a long way to go

This interview with The Rev. Hans Visser appeared in issue number 34 (November/December, 1991) of *O.K.: Tijdschrift voor ouderen-kinderen relaties* (O.K.: Magazine for adult-child relationships), the publication of the Vereniging Martijn, a Dutch pedophile association. The interview was conducted by two of the magazine's editors at the time, P. van der Aalst and M. Kooy. It has been slightly shortened, eliminating brief discussions of several Dutch media personalities unfamiliar to English-speaking readers. Translation by D.H. Mader.

Hans Visser is the minister at the Pauluskerk in Rotterdam. His church is a sanctuary for drug addicts, refugees, prostitutes, homeless people, foreigners and illegal aliens. He also speaks out in solidarity with sexual minority groups. In his view, particularly pedophiles as a group take a very serious bashing from society. They not only have to fight against bitter social prejudice, but also have the law against them.

We caught up with Rev. Visser on a Tuesday afternoon, after he had already been to a demonstration in The Hague, where he was part of a protest action against Dutch policy regarding refugees. The three of us went to a conference room, where he offered us soft drinks.

For years you have maintained contact with the Pedophile Workgroup in Rotterdam.¹ How did it start?

On one occasion an old character, the transvestite Maya, who was involved in the Transvestite and Transsexual workgroup² and was also active in the church, said to me, "You folks really must also do something about the problems of other minority groups that are among the sexual variants." One thing led to another.

In cooperation with the RVSH workgroup we organized an evening conference on pedophilia for which we invited Theo Sandfort, and two years ago Pastor Doucé also presented a lecture here on the subject.³

We believe that we must keep the door open for people who do not follow the traditional path of heterosexuality and are often made social outlaws because of that. It is abundantly clear that that is the case for

pedophiles, because they get driven into the corner and kicked around not only by public opinion, but also by the law.

I should say that our relationship with the group has always been excellent. I've been able to help various pedophiles who have really gotten themselves in a jam. Further, there have been other evenings on sexuality at the church besides those mentioned, to which a lot of people came, and where various NVSH groups had a chance to present themselves. People who attended found this quite unique, but of course there was no real acceptance or agreement. The groups were tolerated on that evening, and people then walked away again snickering.

How is the discussion in the churches?

In the church it is difficult enough to talk about homosexuality, let alone pedophilia. If anyone talks about it, it is only to express prejudices; otherwise there is dead silence. The Rev. Alje Klammer, of the Interchurch Broadcast Network,⁴ did indeed speak up for pedophiles, but somebody like Joseph Douc  was killed because of his efforts for them. From the very beginning the authorities kept an especially close eye on him, and in the end it cost him his life. Excessive reactions like this only make it all the more clear that it is absolutely necessary that we have to continue an open discussion about pedophilia, and help eliminate all the misunderstandings about it. But that's not simple and easy.

As an institution the church offers little comfort. Individual clergy or isolated church members do occasionally come out with nuanced positions.

You stand up for all sorts of minority groups with such passion and energy. Where do you get the strength to do that?

Years ago, when I first took up my work here, we decided on a policy in the interests of all sorts of minority groups. Action for minority groups arises out of the foundations of Judeo-Christian belief.

Jesus has been a very inspirational figure for me. As a person Jesus was non-conformist: he rowed against the current and had very much a mind of his own. He also went around with groups that many people thought he shouldn't have been seen with. A person like that makes others uncomfortable, and after a while begins to be seen as a threat, and ultimately may even be gotten out of the way.

The church must stand up for people suffering oppression, and prevent them from being tossed on the social garbage heap. The concept of Christian love for one's neighbor doesn't have to be entirely a dead letter today. That doesn't mean you always have to be a fiery crusader for each and every one of these people, but it does mean that their existence must be recognized and they must be heard.

My efforts on behalf of various NVSH groups have always generated more resistance than any other activities. Once we published a newsletter with these groups as the subject, and immediately caused a storm of protest. This subject pokes a sore spot with people because it involved their own sexuality and their own problems about it. That makes a lot of people frantic. You erode their defenses and that makes them feel vulnerable.

I myself came from a rather conservative Christian milieu, in which sexuality was undervalued and repressed. People weren't always negative about sex, but it was always subject to strict rules. If you deviated from them, you became very much the outsider and people kept close tabs on what you got up to. It's high time that in Christian circles too people began to think in more modern terms about these things.

Not long ago I was rereading Lex van Naerssen's dissertation again.⁵ His basic thesis is that people must be free to shape their own relationships. In a subject-subject relationship, in open exchanges the partners make clear to each other what they find enjoyable and pleasurable. In Christian circles we're still too much stuck in subject-object relationships. There the first principle is that you have to hold to the rules of the group, and if you don't, you are excluded. In an atmosphere like that, pedophiles get torn to bits, or are viewed as pathetic failures. In a subject-subject relationship between autonomous individuals, there's a mutual exploration of feelings, wishes and desires, discovering what we enjoy without spending too much time asking what our neighbors think of our choices. However, getting to that stage is a learning process.

My personal view on pedophilia is that an age of consent of twelve would be a wise limit. It would be sensible to end all criminal sanctions against relationships above that age. Children who reach twelve know what they are doing, and by taking this out of the hands of the morals squad, the whole topic becomes less charged and more open to rational discussion. Now these relations are criminalized, which means that they

have to go on in secret. That secrecy and silence only leads to the relations having a bitter taste about them.

Of course children under that age also have need of physical contact, also enjoy being petted and stroked, seek warmth and also willingly engage in sex play. But still I think that one should not be involving them in adult sexuality - and by that I am thinking specifically of penetrative sex. What you do with a fifteen-year-old you don't do with a five-year-old.

I myself have observed situations in which an eight-year-old boy took the lead with an adult and experienced sex with him as the most natural thing. In other words, it was very emphatically the boy who took the initiative.

If you encounter such a situation, then you yourself will have to decide what is wise and sensible. Considerable prudence is always advised, and social attitudes being what they are I think you are running a very grave risk. You may really love a child like that, and also really know what the child wants. In terms of drives, now and then there are children fast off the mark. But such young children demand a whole separate sexual ethic. Sexual encounters with them demand an extremely subtle approach. Any pedophile who respects a child is obviously going to be prepared to put himself into the place of that child. There has got to be a foundation of trust; you've got to be able to say to each other, "What do you enjoy? What do I enjoy?"

I lived for years in Indonesia.⁶ You can see situations there where adults manipulate the penises of very young boys, and the boys clearly enjoyed it. This caused no problems, despite the fact that it is a very strict society in which every form of pedosexuality is totally reprehensible. You don't see things like that here. In addition to considerable differences in the culture, in the tropics they wear less clothing, and there is more physical contact there.

Children have sexual feelings, they express them, and they evoke them in others. Then it becomes the task of adults to deal with these very carefully, and if you are sure of what you are doing, and you know that, acting with all restraint, you have not forced anything, and that it was the clearly expressed wish of the child, then I would have to say "what happens in love cannot be ethically condemned." Such a contact can be pleasant for the child. Gone about that way, it is not damaging, but pleasurable, and you can go a long way together.

However, there are also pedophiles who seem to think with their dick. You've got to combine your emotions with a good, healthy understanding of things. There is also a lot of abuse. I have nothing against desire, but it can lead you down the garden path. It is a testimony to your respect for the child if you can make your own desires subsidiary to those of the child, and that's not easy. You can very easily exceed someone's limits if you are not alert. As far as I am concerned, it is also abuse to go to the local cruising area and pay kids for sex.

I do agree with you when you say that children can express themselves eloquently in body language, and can make very clear what they want. But then adults have to be able to rediscover that language and understand it well. There are loads of misunderstandings just waiting in the wings to trip you up, and it requires a very finely attuned sense of empathy. You can accept taking certain risks in such situations. However, in terms of both social attitudes and the law, I suspect that pedophilia will be the last sexual inclination that will be welcomed with open arms.

And then you've always got those people who associate pedophilia with child murder. Obviously, kids being killed sets people off, but they refuse to see that this happens not because of the perpetrator's supposed pedophilia, but because the perpetrator is mentally or emotionally disturbed. Frank van Ree has written an interesting book about that.⁷

During a panel discussion you once said that, seen as a marketing strategy, the concept of pedophilia cannot precisely be called successful. What did you mean?

The word "pedophile" calls up a wave of misunderstandings, even though all that it means is "child lover." It has gotten such a negative meaning, however, because it sets off forces that make you sick. I have no idea how to break through that, either. Perhaps if prominent people who function very normally speak up about pedophilia now and then?

In his scientific reports Theo Sandfort has tried to make some things clear, although the effects on society have been negligible.

Scientific papers are limited to the happy few. However, they are still important. In time, research works through into other disciplines. Judges

do listen to it, although they also have their finger on the public pulse for what the man in the street thinks.

In his writings Dr. Brongersma⁸ speaks of Kinsey's "sliding scale," and Lex van Naerssen also once came out with the idea that every person is by nature, and at their deepest level, essentially an "omniphile" capable of sexual response to all other people irrespective of age or gender. Do you accept that idea?

I don't know, although I am familiar with the idea. I could imagine that it is the case. In fact, nothing human is foreign to us as human beings. When I look back over my own life, I can recognize that as an adolescent various attractions poked their heads up, but they disappeared very quickly again, perhaps because they didn't seem sufficiently viable. The fact is that I have been long and happily heterosexual.

It seems to me, however, that these ideas offer a point of departure for making many things which are otherwise difficult to talk about more easily sympathized with. People must have the courage to open themselves up to them.

As a student I became very good friends with a fellow student, whom I later discovered was homosexual. The fact that I am a bull of a hetero never got in the way of our friendship, however. His being a homosexual had something natural about it. I learned with him to be very open-minded about homosexuality, because as a kid I had also been troubled by all those old wives' tales about what kind of people homosexuals really were. Encounters like that certainly can cure one of all sorts of unhealthy prejudices. In knowing him I had the certainty that I could toss all that ballast overboard, because it wasn't true.

1. A workgroup of the RVSH (Rotterdam association for sexual reform), associated with the NVSH (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming = Dutch association for sexual reform). See note 7 in Document III for more information on these workgroups.

2. A workgroup of the Pauluskerk itself, formed in the early 1980s soon after Rev. Visser's arrival there, to focus on acceptance of transsexuals and transvestites in the church and society. It was the first of the Pauluskerk's ministries with sexual minority groups to be organized; in 1990 it changed its name to the Pastor Doucé Group, in honor of the slain French clergyman, and now, although the majority of its members are still transsexuals or transvestites, also includes members from other sexual minorities.

3. Dr. Theo Sandfort: Dutch researcher, now active in other fields, who published several works on intergenerational relationships. English translations are available: *The Sexual Aspect of Paedophile Relations: The Experience of Twenty-five Boys* (Amsterdam: Pan/Spartacus, 1982), *Boys on Their Contacts with Men* (Amsterdam: Global Academic, 1987), and *The Sexual Experiences of Children*, which appeared in *Paidika: The Journal of Paedophilia* (Amsterdam) 3:1 and 3:2, 1993-4. For Pastor Joseph Doucé and his work, see the first section of Document III.

4. The Rev. Alje Klamer (1923-1986) was a popular Reformed Church radio preacher who advocated reconciliation between the church and sexual minorities who had been excluded by traditional church practice. See Document VIII.

5. Dr. A.X. van Naerssen, chairman of the Department of Psychology at Utrecht University. His dissertation was published under the title *Labyrinth zonder muren* (Utrecht, 1989); no English translation is available.

6. Before coming to the Pauluskerk, Rev. Visser had served as a missionary in Indonesia.

7. *De man die een kind doodde* (Meppel: Boom, 1984; available only in Dutch). Dr. Van Ree was the psychiatrist responsible for the treatment of a child murderer whose case was well known at the time; the book is a study of this case.

8. Dr. Edward Brongersma (1911-1998), author of *Loving Boys* (Amsterdam: Global Academic, 2 vols., 1986, 1990) and for many years a member of the upper house of the Dutch parliament for the Labor Party. During his tenure, as a member of the judicial committee he was instrumental in reforming the Dutch abortion law and equalizing the ages of consent for males and females, for homosexual and heterosexual acts at 16; in the early 1950s he himself had served a prison term for sex with a boy under 21. His frequent defenses of pedophilia made him a target after the Dutroux murders in Belgium in 1996, and he was driven from his home temporarily by mob violence; in failing health and in despair at the vicious turn Dutch opinion was taking toward pedophiles, he opted for medically assisted suicide less than two years later.

III. Pastoral Assistance to Pedophiles

This chapter by the Rev. Hans Visser appeared in the memorial volume for The Rev. Joseph Doucé which he edited, *Voor alles pastor* (Before all else, pastor; Aalsmeer: DABAR, 1993; ISBN 90-6416-245-X), pp. 50-59. An earlier and somewhat shorter version had appeared in *Verwachting* 13:3, October, 1991, the newsletter of the KSA (Foundation for Church Social Work), Rotterdam. This translation by D.H. Mader follows the version in the book.

At the end of 1988 I accompanied the Pauluskerk's workgroup on Travesty and Transsexuality on its visit to Pastor Joseph Doucé's Centre du Christ Libérateur on the Rue de Clairaut in Paris. Over the course of the years, Pastor Doucé had also formed a workgroup for transvestites and transsexuals. The groups from Rotterdam and Paris could work with each other and exchange ideas. I myself wanted the opportunity to get better acquainted with Joseph Doucé and his work. You feel yourself particularly isolated in pastoral work with these groups, so this meeting became an unforgettable happening for me. I was greatly impressed by his powers of observation and persuasion in the lives of the many people he encountered.

As we left, he gave me a copy of his book on pedophilia, which had just appeared.¹ We did not then know that his work among pedophiles would have fatal consequences for him. In his book, Jean Marc Dufours, former inspector in the French Reseignements Généraux, acknowledges that the work with pedophiles at Doucé's Centre was the point of departure for his investigation. This investigation did not shrink from using violence and intimidation.²

The role that Dufours played in Doucé's murder remains obscure. He blames it on a second team from his intelligence service, who without knowing of his own investigation, was carrying on an investigation of their own. In any case, it is clear that Doucé's murder cannot be separated from his work with pedophiles. Anyone who has read Doucé's book on pedophilia will have trouble imagining why the French secret police acted as they did. Pedophilia is quickly equated with child pornography and child prostitution. From his life and work, it is abundantly clear that Doucé had nothing to do with these. On the

contrary, he did his best to restrain pedophiles from becoming involved in the exploitation of children.

It remains beyond understanding how the French secret police got involved in such a badly conceived investigation with such fatal consequences. Pedophilia is an emotionally laden subject. Here in The Netherlands, one can at least discuss it with a certain degree of rationality. Yet the inclination itself is almost totally unacceptable to society. In The Netherlands, too, stories about child pornography and child prostitution make the rounds. Pedophiles who enter the twilight world of child pornography and prostitution will be confronted with a response from the law, which here too does not always act wisely or carefully. In The Netherlands the police do not interfere in work with other sexual minorities, in the way that Doucé regularly experienced in Paris. But still, here in The Netherlands, a police inspector warned me, for the sake of my good name, not to get involved with any pedophile group.

It is to Doucé's credit that he did not shy away from pastoral work with pedophiles. We can learn much from his experiences and the way he worked. It is tragic that this work proved fatal to him.

Closer definitions

Pedophiles are seen as threatening child molesters. Pedophiles are, however, people who love children and respect their vulnerability. Pedophilia can take the form of *pedosexuality*. Dr. Theo Sandfort³ defines this as the form of physical contact between adults and children in which the primary intention on the part of at least one of the partners is to physically call up sexual feelings, in themselves, their partner, or both, in the sense of sexual arousal. Doucé emphasized that pedophile relations were characterized by mutuality. A pedophile relation must be a mutual experience, and not remain at the level of satisfying the needs of only one partner.

The power factor

A serious objection often raised against pedophile relations, involving as they do adults and children, is that the adult exercises a unilateral power over the child. The vulnerable child is still developing. The world of sexual experience for the child is still in a state of becoming. Children do not understand the meaning that adults ascribe to sexuality. Children

have not yet allocated a place to themselves in the moral order of sexuality. Adults should not be allowed to unleash their sexual feelings on a child.

Against this, it has been suggested that the sexual lives of children are often suppressed. Even small children often have intense sexual feelings. They enjoy physical contact. They love stroking, cuddling, tickling and wrestling around. Children demand attention and often provoke adults to responding with physical contact. In pedophile relations, it is often the children who also invite intimacies. An adult can have the feeling that he or she is being led on by the child. Children appear to have their own input in pedophile relations.

Dr. A.X. van Naerssen⁴ makes a sharp distinction between pedophile relations with pubertal children (after age 12) and those with prepubertal children. He is of the opinion that prepubertal children have a sexual desire that is still under development. Such a child does not yet know how to allocate meaning to sexual feelings when they are called up. This would mean that a prepubertal child, a pedophile must exercise the utmost restraint in the expression of his sexual feelings. As Van Naerssen argues in his dissertation:

"Diagnosis and therapy in the case of problems surrounding pedophilia must therefore, in my opinion, not concentrate on pedophile desire, but on the moral argumentation that a person employs with regard to himself and his younger partner. In practice, this implies that men whose desire is concentrated on prepubertal children must curtail forming sexual relations with these children, precisely because they must recognize that their own desire for a sexual relation with a person in whom a reciprocal desire is still not developed, cannot legitimize such a relation.

"Prepubertal children are not innocent, but they have not yet allocated a place to themselves in the moral order of sexuality. It is not up to the adult to give a sexual character to the desires of another, who is younger.

"In a subject-subject relationship, both participants do this.

"If the minor has entered puberty, however, the situation is different. The child is then busily engaged in acquiring a sexual identity, giving meaning to the body as sexual and erotic, to themselves as a young man or woman, and to the other as an object and subject of fascination. Moral argumentation between an adult and a minor about the meaning of their relation is then possible, and indeed necessary...

"The basis for the moral order of sexual relations is laid in the first phase of life. The child learns to evaluate physical contacts as positive or negative. These include physical contacts which offer the possibility of realizing one's own being as subject, and that of the other, as well as contacts in which one becomes an object, and those which lead to the objectification of the other. The moral order of these contacts is initially not sexual (i.e., not directed toward arousal and orgasm), but social (i.e., I approach the other in a contact, or I avoid the other, cut off the contact, or keep my distance). In sexual relations between adults and prepubertal children, this process - the socialization of contacts - is disrupted by demanding the giving of sexual meaning, which the child does not yet know where to place in the moral order. In general, the child will react with fear or aversion. In puberty, this is different. The young person is then able to express the moral components of the relation, and on the basis of such moral judgments decide to enter into the relationship, break it off, or continue it."

At all times, the pedophile must realize that it is not a matter of "having," laying claim to or possessing a child. (For that matter, this is also true for relations within any other sexual inclination!) It is always a matter of being together, experiencing together, mutuality.

From conversations with pedophiles, I have come to understand that in their relationships a balance of power can arise, such that the adult and child can so rise above themselves in a mutual experience, that both are left with a good feeling. I have met adults who had pedophile experiences in their youth, and who look back on them positively, with no feeling that they were harmed.

Socially unacceptable

There have been times and cultures in which pedophile contacts were less problematic. I remember situations in the Third World, where adults openly played with the genitals of children, without that action immediately calling down negative judgments.⁵

Within our culture, with many people you cannot even speak about pedophilia, and thus for them it is totally unacceptable. Even the "sexual revolution" had little influence on this situation, and fear reigns: think of Oude Pekela, or the Bolderkar affair.⁶ Parents no longer allow anyone else to become closely involved with their children.

It is parents who determine the framework within which their

children will learn to deal with sexuality. Those who raise children lay down the norms for them, or in some cases impose those norms forcibly. Children are often warned against "dirty old men." It is, though, quite strange that only men are thought of as pedophiles. Women, too, can be pedophile, but you never hear them mentioned.

Pedophiles live in a threatening world. They are assumed to be sick, degenerate, abnormal, evil. They are equated with child rapists and child murderers. This puts them under tremendous psychological pressure, and they sometimes seek to repress their sexual inclinations. But that can have very negative results. The pressure of the desires which they experience, which society refuses to understand, not infrequently leads to suicide. There is no way out for the pedophile; he or she experiences feelings that fall outside social norms. It would be very helpful for pedophiles if society were to even somewhat ameliorate its attitudes. These are, at the moment, excessively harsh; prison sentences that are being handed down are often disproportionately long. For that matter, prison sentences do not help at all.

Fundamentals of pastoral work with pedophiles

Joseph Doucé was well aware that offering pastoral support to pedophiles was not easy. He was deeply frustrated in his meetings with pedophiles, because he could not help them in the manner in which he wanted to. On the one side, Doucé tried to maintain empathy with the parents, who without any understanding of the situation were confronted with a pedophile relation involving their son or daughter, and reacted very emotionally. On the other side, Doucé had empathy for the feelings of the pedophile, who was painfully in love with the child.

In his eyes, the vulnerability of the child had to be protected. Doucé's thought ran somewhat in the same line as Van Naerssen's, although he probably was not yet familiar with the latter's work. Certainly, Doucé felt that heavy punishments were poor solution.

Doucé argued for a fundamental attitude of listening and open-mindedness. Whoever can empathize with the pedophile's situation can contribute to reducing their isolation. Doucé's goal was to help them recognize that their love for a child must be reciprocal. Egoistic expressions of that love must be set aside. Doucé tried to find the narrow way between on the one hand defending the feelings of the pedophile and his fight to be able to express them, and on the other side defending the parents, who sought to protect their child.

Pastoral work is fundamentally rooted in compassion for the suffering individual. A pedophile is not necessarily any more of a sinner than anyone else, nor does a pedophile necessarily need psychological help any more than anyone else. He or she is an individual with a sexual inclination which is not acceptable to society. In that, the pedophile is like others whose experience of their inclinations diverges from accepted social patterns. It is the pastor's goal to help a person achieve a position of freedom. It is particularly in the area of sexual experience that people are trapped by the social conventions that are laid, or forced, upon them. Here the goal is precisely to be able to give meaning to one's sexual feelings, in freedom and loving responsibility, together with the other. The pastor must warn the person about the difficulties that lie within that process, but he must also stand by the person and not walk away from them when they encounter difficulties.

In his books, Doucé always let those who were directly involved speak for themselves. At the same time, he gave their critics a chance to speak. Doucé did not put individual responsibility that the adult has for the child on the back burner; he also did not close his eyes to the experiences of the children. We still know very little about the sexuality of children and youth. What does the child want, really?

Nor do the real desires of a child - or an adult - always have to be met. In our Christian world view, we experience our physical body as a gift which we have been given. At the same time, we are taught to respect the body of the other. Therefore, the right one has to determine what one will do with one's own body is always relative. My body lives in relation with the bodies of others. I can not always do what I want with my body, much less with the bodies of others.

Meeting your pedophile neighbor

In my work I regularly meet people who, earlier or later in our acquaintance, reveal that they are pedophile. I'd like to introduce you to several of them:

A. is somewhat innocently naive. He doesn't aim very high, but is full of good will. He falls in love with boys in the neighborhood, who are welcome to come around to his house. He makes it comfortable for them, and children sense that. They are drawn to him. His home became a kind of clubhouse for the neighborhood kids. There were all kinds of games, from video games to more serious things. He

sometimes participated in what he saw as innocent sex games with the kids, and touched the genitals of one of them. Rumors went around, and the parents went to the police. The police reacted by cautioning him. For a long time there was no further trouble, then he did it again. This time he was arrested. He was sentenced - not to prison, but probation. He had to move, because the neighborhood no longer accepted his presence. I met with him many times during this period. He was very agitated, because he felt threatened. After the move, he had clearer sailing. Every now and then he comes to see me. Everything will go well, until...

B. has good friends, who don't desert him when there are legal complications. The parents of a boy with whom he engaged in mutual masturbation a couple of times took matters in their own hands; he was beaten to a pulp. He decided to abstain from all contacts with kids. Life that way became unbearable. The pastoral contacts took place when he was extremely nervous about an upcoming court case. B. does have a fantastic employer; whatever happens, his job will be there for him.

C. cannot control himself. He is scarcely through the door, and he is trying to pick up kids. I heard the story of his life: he takes great risks, he picks up hustlers. I looked for psychiatric help for him, but he really doesn't want help. Other pedophiles who tried to help him break off their contacts. I reach my limit when he demands that I respond in ways I cannot and then becomes aggressive at the refusal. He rejects good advice. The pastoral contact is a failure.

D. had already been sentenced. I met him as he was returning to society. He is a fine person, with a golden touch. Children happily play with him, and he with them. Psychiatrists try to help him, but he doesn't want it. Social workers from the probation department work themselves to a frazzle for him, but D. doesn't make it easy for them. He is very pigheaded. At a certain point, when things get too much for him, he starts drinking, and things go totally to pieces. Then he pulls himself back together again, and makes a new start. At the same time, I try to build up his self-confidence. I don't close the door on him, and accept him each time after he slides back. I stimulate his contacts with social workers.

Sometimes it can go well with D. for a long period. But his inclination for children persists. He has another sexual contact with a

youngster. He panics and wants to turn himself in. We talk for a long time. I advise contact with social workers; it is better not to get the police involved. Initially this works; he follows advice. I try as much as possible to put myself in his place. Sometimes he wants me to take a stronger role. Once when I do really get on his case about something - entirely outside the realm of pedophilia - he walks out. At least for the time being...

E. is a friendly man. He is affable and good to have around. He's available for all sorts of volunteer work. He's also active in politics. He picks up immigrant kids in the park, and pays small sums for sex. He talks with me about it, and I advise him against it. He takes the advice, but soon gets involved in a new relation with a youngster whose parents are away more than they are home. The boy sees E. as a father-figure, who treats him with love. Their relationship is moving, but also a cause for worry. After a time, he is threatened by neighborhood vigilantes, and has to flee to safety. He comes across as vulnerable; my contacts with him consist of listening and giving advice.

Personally, I find the workgroups for pedophiles sponsored by the NVSH a godsend.⁷ These groups offer the possibility of carrying on discussions. I have worked together with these groups several times.

What is left for us to do as pastors, is to continue to be involved with people like these, to listen carefully, not walk away, and try to understand what feelings are at issue. Pastoral work demands careful assessment of the interpretations that people give to their experience. I do ask critical questions, and also try to encourage understanding for the feelings of parents and the society, which is still influenced by prejudice and fears pedophiles. There is still a very long way to go before acceptance of pedophilia will come about.

Acceptance does not imply that you excuse everything that another does. Acceptance means that you begin where the other is, and take his feelings seriously. In pastoral work, you must not set any impossible conditions.

Not long ago I had a deep conversation with two pedophiles. It was an intimate conversation, and was characterized by mutuality. I could learn from them, and also dared to speak about my own experience of sexuality. The conversation was a positive experience. I realized once again how difficult it is to judge the experience of pedophiles. I realized that what happens out of real love for a child

cannot be condemned ethically.

1. *La Pédophilie en Question*, edited by Joseph Doucé, foreword by Dr. Jacques Waynberg (Paris: Éditions Lumière & Justice, 1988). It contains a series of articles organized under the headings Personal Accounts, Law, Dr. Edward Brongersma, Psychology, Christianity, Literature and the Pedophile Movement. Doucé himself wrote the general introduction, the introductory note to the Christianity section, and the section on psychology.

2. Jean Marc Dufours, *Section Manipulation, de l'antiterrorisme à l'affaire Doucé* (1991). Several other books dealing with Doucé's murder exist in French, including François d'Eaubonne, *Scandale d'une Disparition* (1991), and Bernard Violet, *Mort d'un pasteur* (1994), which is really more interested in smearing the former socialist government than in the Doucé case itself. The most easily accessible account in English is William Middleton, "Last Rights," *Out*, December 1992/January 1993.

3. See note 3, Document II.

4. See note 5, Document II.

5. Before taking up inner city ministry in Rotterdam, Visser had been a missionary in Indonesia.

6. Oude Pekela, a small village in the northeast of The Netherlands, was the scene of a moral panic in 1987, when a husband and wife pair who were the town's doctors reported that a large number of the toddlers in the town showed signs of sexual molestation. Interviews with the children led to reports that they had been taken away by people dressed as clowns, who made child pornography videos of them. A thorough police investigation, which actually plotted the location of everybody in the town during the period when these things were alleged to have happened, turned up no evidence to support any of the allegations. Eventually investigators realized the children were describing their experience at the hands of the doctors, dressed in white uniforms, as their medical examinations for signs of abuse were videotaped. Despite this, the case is still often referred to as an "unsolved crime". The case is masterfully analyzed in Benjamin Rossen, *Zedenangst: Het verhaal van Oude Pekela* (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1989). In 1989, a psychologist using interviews with anatomically correct dolls diagnosed many of the children in the Bolderkar day care center in the province of South Holland as having been sexually abused, which led to their being taken into care and their fathers detained on incest charges. All but one of the charges were eventually dropped, and the government introduced rules restricting the placing of charges based solely on the outcome of interviews using anatomically correct dolls.

7. The NVSH (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming = Dutch association for sexual reform) sponsors monthly meetings for members of sexual minorities (transsexuals and transvestites, sadists and masochists, exhibitionists and pedophiles, among others) in major Dutch cities. Until 1994, when the Amsterdam

police accused the pedophile group there of being nothing but a child pornography exchange, the authorities tolerated or even encouraged the pedophile groups as a means of decreasing the isolation of individuals and preventing serious crimes against children - and perhaps of keeping track of pedophiles. Over the past five years, there have also been efforts by other elements in the NVSH itself in several cities to discontinue sponsorship for the pedophile meetings. As pedophiles are increasingly coming under attack in The Netherlands, these groups are now reevaluating their policies, and perhaps even their continuation. Groups in several cities have closed their meetings to outside visitors or ceased meeting altogether.

IV. Pastoral Work and Pedophilia

The following article was published in *De andere kant van de medaille* (The other side of the coin; Rotterdam: Stichting Kerkelijk Sociale Arbeid, 1998; ISBN 90-5782-016-1), a book of readings on pedophilia edited by Rev. Visser, issued to coincide with a study conference with the same title for academics and members of helping professions held at the Pauluskerk on December 18, 1998. The purpose of the conference was to introduce in Europe the results of American research conducted by Bruce Rind, PhD., Robert Bauserman, PhD. and Philip Tromovitch (PhD. Cand.). The data they examined was collected from numerous surveys of non-clinical populations done over the past decades (either general adult population samples or college student samples) in which respondents had been asked whether they had experienced a sexual contact with an adult when they were minors, and how they now felt about it. When the data was processed by the technique of meta-analysis, it indicated that far from all intergenerational sexual contacts are assessed as negative experiences by the younger partner when looking back on the contact as an adult, and indeed that to varying degrees the experiences may be assessed as positive. This information should, as the title of the conference indicates, require that the other side of the coin be seen, and the assumption that pervasive and severe damage always accompanies such contacts be abandoned, with such contacts, when they occur, being evaluated individually. After the research presentation, five Dutch authorities representing the fields of sexology, psychiatry, psychology and the ministry were asked to comment to the American research. Rev. Visser's response, also included in the conference papers, was an abbreviated version of this article. The translation is courtesy of Desire's child-love pages <<http://www.fpc.net/pages/desire>>

Recently I was speaking with a colleague about pedophilia. In the course of the conversation he remarked, "You've certainly got to be mentally disturbed to get your kicks with children." I have thought about this comment. At first I didn't want to comprehend it; later I tried to feel what the person in question meant. Pedophilia is a sexual orientation which we find hard to imagine. It is a way of experiencing sexuality that I and others cannot share with pedophiles. Yet we must try to use our understanding to accept that that is how pedophiles are. But pedophiles

are more than just sexual creatures, because they also have many other qualities, which can make them pleasant and valuable fellow human beings.

Professor Louis Gooren¹ taught me how to accept people with different sexual orientations. We cannot understand at all how it can be that a pedophile falls in love with a child, and vice versa, a pedophile cannot understand what inspires me. But such differences have to be accepted. These differences must not be denied or reduced to complete irrelevancy. As Dr. Gooren says, our task is to live with these differences and accept them, as long as they do not encroach upon the integrity of another human being, in this case a child. However, not every form of experiencing sexuality is acceptable. There are also sexual experiences in which pedophiles can be involved that are unacceptable because the child's integrity is violated. That has to be completely clear.

These are difficult times for pedophiles. They are total outcasts from society. They are hunted down, stigmatized and criminalized. There is no space today for an open dialogue with them about their orientation. Every pedophile act is regarded as abuse. In this light, the attitude of the major Dutch churches is very sad. They claim they do not distance themselves from the pedophile as a person, but distance themselves from his sexual orientation. But how is it possible to accept a person without his or her sexual orientation? The rest of society leaves these people to their fate. At best we push them into a big swamp where they are left to flounder on their own, "as long as they don't touch my children."

But back to the pedophile himself. He is in love with a child, but does not want to abuse the child; he knows the attitude of society, but he does not want to act in secret. He is also not at all interested in violent pornography, in which children are raped, abused, manipulated, but he can enjoy a picture of a nude girl or boy. The mere picture of the face of a child calls up emotions. But even that's not allowed any more, because it has become illegal to possess pictures. Pedophiles have been advised by counselors and social workers to burn all their movies and pictures. Every option is taken away from them.

It is my firm conviction that the present witchhunt against pedophiles is extremely counter-productive. There was a time when pedophiles were dealt with in a wiser manner. It was the era in which the IKON-pastor, Rev. Alje Klamer,² reached out a pastoral hand to pedophiles, listened to them and was available for them. It was also the time when the PSVG, which in its later days occupied itself with many aspects of sexuality,

published a booklet about pedophilia.³ I want to pause to examine that booklet once more.

The booklet tries to make clear that not every sexual contact or every sexual relationship between an adult and a child implies abuse of the child. Certainly, some horrible situations exist as well; these can not be denied. But precisely because of this it is of the utmost importance to know more about how children, and pedophiles, experience sexuality.

In the booklet we read that pedophiles are people who feel attracted to children, also sexually. If the pedophile is not allowed to have those feelings, then it is clear that he is not allowed to be himself. Among the other things the booklet tells us are that pedophile persons want to show their feelings for children - physically too. That does not mean that they feel a need for intercourse, for penetration, because they know that children aren't ready for that yet, that it may harm children, that it crosses boundaries. Many pedophiles thus do not engage in this kind of sexual activity. Dealing with a child requires respect and caution. Sexual contact may not be forced. The adult may not abuse his power. The child may not be emotionally manipulated. Research shows that children experience a certain pleasure from mild sexual contacts, especially if they experience affection as well. Sometimes children undergo this passively, but they may also become active themselves. The booklet says that it is a mistake to look at children's sexuality from the point of view of our own adult sexuality and the feelings that go with it. If we do so, we project our own opinions, feelings and experiences on children.

The booklet notes that often a child will experience no problems in a relation with a pedophile. Problems often start when those around the child, for example the parents, panic, so the child gets the idea that something terrible has happened. That can damage a child. The booklet also tells us that sexuality must not be burdened by being something that happens secretly in the dark, that it should not be experienced as something that is dirty and not really acceptable. This causes feelings of guilt which have nothing to do with really being guilty of something.

What the PSVG with its booklet and Reverend Klamer especially managed to do, was to listen to pedophiles closely and think with them about their modes of behavior. It is sad that this approach has been given up by the churches in our time.

As already noted, we know too little about our children's world of experience. Children's experience is often regarded as insignificant, not taken seriously. Freud assumed that children underwent a latency phase with respect to sexuality. Research later showed that that is not the

case. Children between six and twelve can display budding sexual feelings as well. A child however is vulnerable and should not be pushed. I have already said, and I will repeat once more, that adults should not project their own feelings upon the child. A pedophile relation must be an encounter between an adult and a child in which the child's freedom remains intact. A child should not be doing something he or she does not want.

The situation is different when children reach puberty. Then there certainly are adolescent sexual feelings. The young person is on the road to adulthood. In that phase too encounters will take place between adolescents and adults. An adolescent remains vulnerable and has a right to protection. Because of this every pedophile who wants to deal with his orientation in a responsible way, knows that no mind games, no violence, no threats should ever take place. He also knows that a position of authority which he may hold should not be used, because in a position of authority, power can be abused. In itself it is understandable that a teacher falls in love with a pupil, but such a relationship is in danger of involving the power factor. It might be the case that the adult does not use such power, it might be that the adult indeed does not go further than the young person wants. But we do not know that for sure. Coercion and bribery, offering "presents" in return for sex, are also taboo, because this can poison a relationship.

In our culture there is a deep-rooted negativity with respect to sex. Despite the sexual revolution there still exists a taboo. For many people, children as well, sex is something dirty. Sex is only a step away from abuse. It is a pity that sexuality is not experienced as good and beneficial. Historically, the church has contributed significantly to this deep-rooted negativity.

It is also regrettable that in our time both adults and children are sometimes exposed to a commercialization of sexuality that can poison people's experience of the world. There are pedophiles who, often under the influence of this commercialism, become very sex-obsessed, directed towards penetration and orgasm, and it can also happen that children sometimes encounter images in videos and movies that are not suitable for them, which in the long term can lead to a certain decay of the experience of sexuality. It is clear that all this can have an extremely negative influence on sexual contacts between adults and children; in that case there is a great danger of things happening that would be better if they had not happened.

In these remarks on pastoral work and pedophilia of course we can not avoid speaking about the possible damage that children can suffer in sexual contacts with adults. There are children who do not have pleasant memories of such encounters. The cause of such unpleasant memories is often the atmosphere of illicitness, or the experience of things that were not really wanted. This damage can crop up later in life. But this damage can also be dramatized. Society can suggest to us that we have been damaged. It is precisely in a time when people think very negatively about pedophilia that this danger increases. I have the uneasy suspicion that sometimes certain feelings of guilt are foisted onto people, that people are persuaded that things which have happened should not have happened.

Often when evaluating relationships between adults and children, one observes that there is no reciprocity. A relationship between an adult and a child should be reciprocal. Both must be able to say to the other what they find pleasant in the association, both must be able to show this silently or in words. A pedophile relationship should also always be a joint experience, and certainly not remain unilateral. I think that sometimes pedophiles overstep the mark on this point. They often determine the terms of the relationship unilaterally. In all fairness it should be remarked that this also holds true for all other sexual relationships too, also those between adults, because there reciprocity can be missing as well.

Let us return to the pedophile himself. As I said, he lives in a difficult time. The society around him is full of threats; he is pictured by society as sick, degenerate, abnormal and evil. Often it is taken for granted that he is a rapist and sex murderer. That makes him confused about himself and about what he is feeling, and sometimes it happens that he represses his sexuality, but that can have a negative result too. His desire, shunted into the shadows, not understood by society, not rarely leads to suicide. Because he experiences feelings that fall outside the norms of society, the pedophile has nowhere to turn. If society would revise its norms slightly, to afford a bit more of the necessary breathing space, pedophiles could begin to deal with the problems they face. Societal reactions now are often extraordinary harsh. Punishments are inflicted that are disproportionately severe. And it goes without saying, of course, that in general imprisonment accomplishes nothing.

Being a pastor means that one cares for people, pulls together with them, engages in dialogue with them, listens to their motives. That caring also means that one does not walk away, does not hide behind societal prejudices, because then one lets the pedophile down. Being a pastor also requires a scrupulousness in appraising the interpretations that people give to their experiences. The pedophile has to learn to understand why there is so much aversion in society as well. Many parents regard their children as their property, want to protect that property, and cannot stand the thought that an adult would experience something sexual with their children. But children are not property, they are entrusted to their parents. They still require protection, but while growing up must receive more and more freedom to unfold. Such protection must not imply that other adults are kept away. Parents also need to entrust their children to other adults: one can think of youth work, education and medical care. Parents then have a right to know that nothing will happen to their children behind their backs, without consultation, in secrecy.

Pastoral acceptance of a fellow human who is a pedophile implies understanding for his orientation. Pastoral acceptance does not imply that everything that happens is to be excused. In pastoral guidance there always comes a critical moment when together you must seek to distinguish between what is good and what is not so good, between what is wise and what is less wise. Sometimes the pastor will also have to urgently advise the pedophile in these times to abstain from certain things that perhaps in themselves would be ethical justified. Public opinion is merciless, and the pedophile has to be protected against that harshness as well. We must not allow people to be destroyed or hounded by society. In pastoral care we also want to take the achievements of other disciplines into account: medical science, psychology, sociology. It should be possible to refer pedophiles to other helping professionals, who can assist them in learning to handle their feelings in such a way that they can be happy with those feelings.

There are no cut and dried answers about what is permissible and what is not. Above we have noted that penetration is undesirable for several reasons. It can hurt the child, and is an adult form of sexuality that is strongly directed to orgasm. On the other hand I can't say that mutual masturbation is undesirable in all circumstances. It is conceivable that there are situations where it takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and mutual enjoyment of intimacy. Then it would be ethically acceptable. But it is also conceivable that there are situations where the child feels forced into participation, that it does not happen

spontaneously, that the child does not like it at all. Then it is ethically reprehensible. It is not easy to decide that for someone else.

The reader will sense from the above that I seek to accept the person who is pedophile in a way that takes his orientation seriously. I also try to be up front about that with him, because he is entitled to that; that is one of the things involved in being a pastor.

The Maastricht psychiatrist and sexologist Gerard Roelofs recently said in an interview that not every pedophile is a pervert.⁴ He stated it clearly: pedophilia is not a deviation, it is a normal, innate variant of human sexual preference. We should not attempt to drive it underground, because that will leave us even further from a solution. The conditions for a good pedophile relationship should be discussed. Roelofs makes a sharp distinction between sexuality with children below and above twelve years old. In his opinion, in the case of children below twelve there is no mutuality. Above twelve that is possible, in his view; in that case a sexual relationship with an adult is not necessarily harmful. Roelofs thinks that it is also a duty of society to find a form in which the pedophile can express himself, without damaging the child: for instance that we are able to make a distinction between mutual masturbation and cynical, pointless sado-masochistic games. What Roelofs also wants to do, is to make pedophilia something we can discuss rationally, instead of just shouting abuse and slogans. Today it takes courage for a professional like Roelofs to treat the pedophile in such a way that the pedophile knows he is dealing with someone who is willing to think along with him.

My colleague Joseph Doucé also was engaged in pastoral work with pedophiles in France in the 1980s. In the end it led to his death. He was killed, and there are strong indications it was related to his pastoral care for pedophiles, which was completely misunderstood. Joseph Doucé remains for me a good example of a good pastor, a shepherd. The good shepherd risks his life for his sheep. In the same way, Doucé gave his life in the pastorate for pedophiles. I still hope that it was not in vain.

1. Louis Gooren, PhD., MD, Professor of Endocrinology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, was a pioneer in work with transsexuals, and remains a frequent contact of Rev. Visser's in counselling and pastoral work with individuals considering sex change operations.

2. See note 4, Document II. IKON=Interkerkelijk Omroep Nederland=Dutch Interchurch Broadcasting Network. See also Document VIII.

3. Protestantse Stichting voor Verantwoorde Gezinsvorming (Protestant Foundation for Responsible Family Development); see Document VII for the text of this booklet and information about the PSVG.

4. "Niet elke pedofiel is een smeerlap," interview with Dr. Gerard Roelofs by Sjors van Beek and Jasper Groen, *De Limburger*, Saturday supplement, August 8, 1998, p. 33.

V. Hounding Pedophiles is Counterproductive

The following article by the Rev. Hans Visser appeared on the opinion page of the Dutch national daily *Trouw*, a paper with a generally Protestant Christian stance, on October 2, 1998. The proposals he is responding to included, in their initial form, a national register of convicted pedophiles, and would bar anyone whose name appears on the register from any employment in which they might come in contact with minors (education, medicine, social work, recreation, park maintenance, etc.). Calls to expand the proposal (for instance, to make it a criminal offence for those on the list to even apply for such jobs, to expand the list to include suspected pedophiles too, to deny passports to those on the list, to use the list to bar those on it from living in certain neighborhoods, or to make the list available to the public) are made regularly; as of the publication of this booklet at the end of 1999 the Ministry of Justice has still not produced a definitive text for submission to parliament. Translation by D.H. Mader.

It is with mounting surprise and growing vexation that I have been following the proposal to create a register of sexual offenders who have received custodial sentences for offenses against children, in order to prevent them from coming into contact with children in the course of future employment. According to its proponents, there is a chance of recidivism. The next step is that we will have to have a register of where these people live. Every conceivable step must be taken to protect the welfare of children. At that point the train will jump the tracks.

Those seeking to protect children from abuse should be taking steps to make sure that pedophiles are no longer driven from pillar to post and stigmatized, but instead are given an opportunity to enter into dialogue with society in order to determine what forms of conduct with children are truly unacceptable in the light of protecting the integrity of children. There are people in our society who have a pedophile orientation. They spend their whole life struggling to come to terms with this. Just as among heterosexuals and homosexuals, among pedophiles there are also sick individuals who will abuse others. But a pedophile is not, by definition, a child abuser. In the course of their development as sexual beings, every person must learn to distinguish the boundaries that preserve the integrity of another. Even on the wider scale of crime and

violence, in counselling with problem youth I have had to conclude that there are many who are unable to recognize such boundaries. Respecting human boundaries must become an issue for social debate.

The witchhunt surrounding child pornography, and the media feeding frenzy surrounding Clinton's sexual activities only serve to prove that, despite all our apparent openness about sexuality, we often quite at a loss when it comes to our own experience of sexuality and how we shape it. The Stoic philosophers called infatuation a form of mental illness. As far back as that, that was their way of pointing to the fact that erotic feelings can get badly out of hand. But that doesn't have to be the case. The wider debate about pornography is another thorny issue. Society quite properly rejects violent pornography, or pornography that entirely disconnects sexual fulfillment from any experience of another person's reality. But there is also pornography which stirs the imagination and which can gratify erotic needs. That is true irrespective of the nature of one's sexual orientation. While there is much too much filth in the pornography available, we should not be throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Similarly, there are pedophiles who can obtain their satisfaction from looking at pictures of children. A social worker from a community mental health service who advises them that they should destroy all these pictures doesn't have his head screwed on tight. He is cutting off someone's lifeline. It is high time that our country had a well organized service to which pedophiles could come to discuss their problems. Now that has to happen in back rooms, safe from the prying cameras of our respected national television networks.

Hounding pedophiles is counterproductive. A pedophile told me recently that he feels he is slowly but certainly being driven mad. He dares not possess a magazine with pictures of nude children to look at. His heart skips a beat at the thought of his name being placed on a register, and all the exposure that could mean. Following the publication of the names of the hundreds taken into custody during the recent sweeps on suspicion of child pornography in France [the vast majority subsequently released without charges, ed.], we have seen just what that can mean in terms of lost jobs, homes and reputations, and the suicides which follow. The same man has told me he is already so desperate for any contact with a child that when he was bicycling through a park and saw a youngster, he had to fight with himself, turn around and rush home. But there is no confidential assistance to which I can refer him.

If we try to banish pedophiles from society and increasingly stigmatize these people, sooner or later we will be confronted with an

increase in child abuse. That abuse will arise from the loss of control on the part of isolated individuals, thrust into the swamp of their own feelings by a society which refuses to give them a place to turn. In this light, it is scandalous that the churches in The Netherlands have undone all the efforts of our colleague, Rev. Klamer.¹ His pastoral work on behalf of pedophiles opened up a path. He was no proponent of an "anything goes" philosophy. But today the churches' pastoral message is that all expressions of pedophilia are child abuse. A society which often hasn't a clue about how to handle its own sexuality is searching for scapegoats. It can only be hoped that in parliament there are still enough cool heads around to put a halt to this fatal persecution.

1. See note 4, Document II, and Document VIII.

VI. Witchhunt on Pedophiles Will Backfire

A year later, on November 4, 1999, Rev. Visser again sounded the same alarm in this article on the opinion page of the *Algemeen Dagblad*, a mid-market Dutch daily paper. Here he is also responding to two sexual assaults and murders of young girls within several months over the summer of 1999 by recently released sex offenders, and a series of mob attacks on the homes of suspected pedophiles. Not long before this article appeared a man and his whole family were driven from their home in The Hague after rumors went around the neighborhood accusing him of pedophilia. Translation by D.H. Mader.

In itself, it is a good sign that many parents are insisting on steps being taken to protect children. It may be fervently hoped that it will eventually get through to all these parents, passionately collecting signatures on petitions and setting up internet sites, that children run the most serious risk of harm through psychological or physical abuse from their own parents, for instance through incest, beatings or neglect. The potential for damage as a result of pedophile contacts should not be minimized, but it certainly should not be exaggerated as it has been of late.

In practice, the most serious damage is often caused by public pronouncements by "experts" who have dealt exclusively with disturbed pedophiles, the panicky reactions on the part of parents these cause, and leading questioning of victims by police and social workers. That will not make welcome reading for many, but those are the facts of the matter, eclipsed as they may be by misunderstandings and malicious mythologization. It goes without saying that rapes and murders of children are dreadful. As the parent of four children I would also react furiously if someone sexually assaulted a child of mine. That touches the deepest instincts of a parent. But wide contacts with pedophiles have taught me that this basic instinct of parents to protect their children has not always led to wise policies. Most pedophiles (married or not) love and respect children, and do not sexually assault children. Just as is the case for other people with other sexual orientations, there are pedophiles who are psychologically ill, and consequently require medical help.

These are difficult times for pedophiles. Social acceptance has been reduced to zero. Hugging a child or expressing appreciation for a picture of a beautiful child alone are enough to call up suspicions. It would be to

its own best advantage for society to begin a dialogue with pedophiles about ways in which their orientation can be expressed. The present witchhunt on pedophiles only isolates them and raises their level of frustration. That can mean that individuals begin to act out in secret, and act in ways that are not in the best interests of children. Real tragedies can result. Pedophiles who have never been involved with police or courts are having their most basic identity denied, rejected and destroyed.

Pedophiles who have come in contact with law enforcement in the past because they have violated laws, where one can not honestly call their actions rape or assault, but careless conduct, find it almost impossible to reestablish themselves in society. Often these people are married and have families. Whole families then become the victims. Their children are taunted by their fellow pupils at school on account of their father's past. No community will accept them; there is nowhere they can come to rest and rebuild lives. One victim produces more victims. The cycle never stops.

It is still another story for those who are seriously disturbed in the area of sexuality. In some cases long-term treatment in a secure facility can be beneficial, and the person can return to society - but they are given no chance. In other cases individuals may have to be kept under treatment or restraint for the rest of their life, but we still have a responsibility to them as fellow human beings.

Existing services to help pedophiles are totally insufficient. Young people who are discovering their orientation as pedophiles are left in the lurch and have nowhere to turn. The present witchhunt on pedophiles can only backfire.

I believe the stoking up emotions on this issue is irresponsible. Protection of children is best furthered by encouraging respectful treatment of children on the part of pedophiles. Those who encourage discrimination against pedophiles, hound them or want to isolate them, are laying a time bomb under the protection of children. Such pressures will only produce tragedies.

There are some individuals who must be watched more closely by police, probation officers and social workers. But the people next door are not part of that equation. When they take the law into their own hands and drive out their neighbors, they reduce society to the law of the jungle. The predictable boomerang effect will not be slow in coming. The medicine will have been worse than the illness.

VII. PSVG Booklet

The PSVG - the Protestantse Stichting voor Verantwoorde Gezinsvorming (Protestant Foundation for Responsible Family Development) - was an initiative of the two major branches of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. It published a series of booklets on family planning, sex education and controversial sexual issues; among titles included in the series were Contraception (Nr. 1), Homosexuality (Nr. 2), Sterility (Nr. 3), Pedophilia (Nr. 4), Venereal Diseases (Nr. 5), Drugs and Sex (Nr. 6), Youth and Sex (Nr. 8), Sterilization (Nr. 9), Sexuality and the Elderly (Nr. 10), Sex Education (Nr. 14), Prostitution (Nr. 15), Abortion (Nr. 16) and Sexuality and the Mentally Handicapped (Nr. 17). Their booklet on pedophilia, presented here, was written by their staff member Dick de Groot, and published in two editions, 1979 and a revised edition in 1981, totaling 40,000 copies. An English translation of the first edition was prepared in 1980 by Frank Torey, and had limited circulation as a mimeographed brochure by the Childhood Sensuality Circle, San Diego, California. The following text is based on Mr. Torey's translation, but has been revised to reflect the changes made by the PSVG in the 1981 edition. The PSVG was closed as a result of budget cuts in the mid-1980s.

PEDOPHILIA

INTRODUCTION

This booklet deals with pedophilia. Many people will perhaps find it difficult to read this booklet without becoming upset. Pedophilia is an emotionally charged subject. That has to do primarily with the "sexual" aspect of pedophilia. Often when people hear the word, they identify pedophilia with the sexual abuse of children by adults. Adults who sexually abuse children cause damage to children. In this booklet we will explain that far from all sexual contacts or sexual relations between a child and an adult imply sexual abuse. Many sexual contacts between adults and children do not have to result in any damage, and there are also sexual contacts which are pleasant and valued by the child.

We wish to emphasize that in this booklet. In doing so, we do not intend to say that sexual contacts with an adult always turn out positively for a child. Unfortunately damaging things do occur, and we do not deny that.

If you have difficulty with certain parts of this booklet, don't dismiss it out

of hand. First try to calmly think exactly what it is you have difficulty with. Further along we have listed ideas and opinions which are very common. If you are not able to discover where your difficulty lies, look at this list.

This booklet is intended for everyone who wants to know more about pedophilia, but especially for those who actually deal with it. That includes primarily pedophiles themselves and the children with whom they are involved. Then there are the parents of the children, and the families of pedophiles. Because of present day penal laws, policemen, judges and public prosecutors are also confronted with this phenomenon. Social workers, too, are involved.

Quite properly, this booklet is also intended for children, but children who read this booklet will very quickly see that it is especially written for grown-ups. This is because 'pedophilia' isn't just a grown-up's word, but, in many cases, is a grown-up's problem. With this booklet we intend to provide an image of pedophilia - perhaps a better one. We will set the facts out clearly, to remove misunderstandings and prejudice.

WHAT IS PEDOPHILIA?

People have all sorts of affectionate and sexual feelings - homophile feelings, pedophile feelings, heterophile feelings.

Some people have more of one sort than another sort. If we think about it this way we can put a label on people; someone who is mostly attracted to members of the same sex we call a homophile, someone who is attracted to members of the opposite sex we call a heterophile. A person who is drawn mostly in the direction of children is termed a 'pedophile.'

The word literally means 'someone who loves children.' This literal meaning really gives a precise description of what pedophile feelings are all about. Seen from this perspective, we all have these feelings, consciously or unconsciously. Sexuality sometimes plays a role in these feelings. You yourself can recognize that, for instance, when you find the physical contact enjoyable when you romp with children.

WHO ARE THEY?

People whose primary attraction is to children are found everywhere. They are male and female, women of 25 and men of 50, fat people and thin people, big and small, friendly and unfriendly. As with heterophiles and homophiles, there is no way you can tell from their outward appearance.

Pedophile persons can feel an attraction to children of a different sex, to children of the same sex, or both.

WHAT ARE PEDOPHILES?

Pedophiles are people who feel themselves primarily attracted to children, including in a sexual sense. That attraction to children is experienced as such an important value, that they consider it as a very essential part of who they are. If they weren't allowed to have these feelings they wouldn't be the people they are.

WHAT DO PEDOPHILES DO WITH CHILDREN?

The short answer is that pedophile persons do exactly the same things with children as other adults do, except that sometimes sexual relations occur in addition. Pedophile persons want to express their feelings for children, in physical ways as well. Thus, especially in the case of young children, sexual activity seldom includes any kind of sexual penetration. Children are not yet physically big enough for this. An adult male who introduces his penis into the vagina of a girl or the anus of a boy will usually cause the child pain. For this reason alone pedophiles normally don't try.

What then do they do? They talk to each other, laugh together, play together and so on. Children and pedophiles also make love to one another. They hug and cuddle each other, they let each other see their sex organs. Pedophiles also masturbate their little friends or masturbate while their little friends watch, or they engage in mutual masturbation with them.

WITH WHOM DO THEY DO IT?

Pedophiles are drawn to children between the ages of about eight and fifteen. When children approach puberty they sometimes lose their sexual attractiveness for the pedophile. This may be difficult for the youngster to accept. Sometimes, however, a strong friendship remains. Just as in the case of other adults, pedophiles can have contacts with children they have known for only a short time and with children they have known much longer. Usually the partners in a pedophile relationship have known one another some length of time before they have sexual contact. They often live close to one another in the same neighborhood. The adult partner is sometimes a friend of the child's parents, or even a member of the family.

HOW DO THE CONTACTS BEGIN?

Sexual contacts between children and pedophiles take place in short, one-off contacts and in longer lasting relationships. The sexual contact in longer-lasting relationships often develops gradually. A time comes when

the relationship suddenly becomes more intimate; then it can become sexual. Thus it doesn't make sense to talk about who takes the initiative. As the relationship gradually develops there comes a moment when both partners simply feel that sex is a fitting part of it. Thus it is generally not the case that one of the two is "pushing for it," but that the sexual contact arises after "signals" have gone back and forth.

As we have said, a long-lasting relationship is not always necessary for this. One-off and shorter relations will often include a sexual contact. But in these cases it is also true that it takes place after signals have gone back and forth.

It can happen that sex is forced on a child. The adult can misuse his power. He or she can compel the child or trick him into giving in. This is not, however, specific to pedophile sexuality. Compulsion and force sometimes occur in homophile and heterophile contacts, too. But children are less able to defend themselves from this than are adults. Children are more easily abused. Sexuality is not the only field in which this is true. Relationships with children always require respect and restraint.

WHAT DO CHILDREN THINK ABOUT THEIR PEDOPHILE EXPERIENCES?

Pedophile relations are not just a matter of sexuality. A bond of friendship can also arise, which often continues on after the end of the sexual aspect of the relationship. The adult can be someone who is very meaningful in the child's life, as a person the child can confide in, who is a source of support, a mentor - but before all else, as a friend.

The feelings which a child experiences in such a relationship are feelings of loving and being in love. The meaning that the sexual aspect has for the child cannot be compared with the meaning that it has for the adult. Sometimes children take the passive role in sex; they find it pleasant to accept the attentions. They enjoy the affection and find the caressing nice. It gives them a sense of pleasure. But children can also take an active role. Then they enjoy caressing the adult and actively making love to them.

Children apparently don't think of sex as something separate from the relationship itself. Through the attitudes of others and through what they have been taught, they have often learned that sexuality should be seen as something "separate." Therefore they often stoutly refuse to talk about the relationship with others.

CHILDREN AND SEXUALITY

When discussing above how children feel about these relations, we

expressed ourselves cautiously, saying they "apparently feel this or that." This note of caution must be observed because we do not really know very much about children's sexuality. We can only guess about it, and in doing so we often make the mistake of looking at it from the perspective of our own feelings. We 'project,' as it were, our own opinions, feelings and experiences onto children. Perhaps this is because adults want to forget their own childhood when it comes to sexuality. This is because adults, through the sexual experiences in their childhood, have learned that these are "not allowed." The feelings which they themselves once had as children, when they played 'doctor' or 'mommy and daddy,' have long been deeply buried.

If you really want to know something about children's sexuality you have to take an unprejudiced look at children themselves - and perhaps also take an unprejudiced look at yourself. Adults can often become quite upset if they discover within themselves a sexually colored impulse to caress a child, while washing it, for example.

Children always have to deal with parents. Parents forbid, punish, get mad. Very early on, children learn that they must not do 'dirty' things. Even when parents don't actually say anything, children feel from their attitude that some play they enjoy is not permitted. Therefore they do these things at times and in places where they will not easily be discovered. If children touch their genitals, their parents forbid it or suggest some other activity. Children quickly come to believe that such things are bad.

Parents are very important figures in a child's life. Parents have power. Grown-ups - parents, grandparents, teachers, policemen, doctors and so on - all those grown-ups determine what a child can and cannot do. A child's world has very narrow boundaries. Adult drivers make the street where children play a dangerous place, the houses where they live were built by adult architects and their lessons are taught by adult teachers. The boundaries of their world are narrower than we often think.

Grown-ups also determine the limits for children's sexuality. They decide what is good and what is bad, what is dirty and what is nice. You could also say that the opinions of adults set the limits for children's sexuality. This, of course, applies to pedophile contacts as well.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Thus far in this booklet we have tried to explain what pedophiles do, what pedophilia is and what happens in pedophile relationships and contacts. There are a great many misconceptions and prejudices about pedophilia, and these to a large extent determine how society reacts. We will now take a closer look at a number of these misconceptions and prejudices.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles go around trying to seduce children

Many people think that pedophiles go around trying to seduce children with candy, ice cream and gifts to get the children to go with them to some deserted spot. This occasionally happens, but it is far from usual.

MISCONCEPTION: All pedophiles are homosexuals

Some people think that all pedophiles are homosexuals. This is not true. Some pedophiles are attracted to members of their own sex, other pedophiles to members of the opposite sex.

MISCONCEPTION: All homosexuals are pedophile

This, too, is untrue. People with a pedophile orientation can be found among both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles are dirty old men

Not true. Pedophiles occur in all age groups, young and old. And they are not just men; women can just as easily be sexually oriented toward child as men can. People always think of men because society considers it far more normal for a woman to caress and display her love for a child than for a man to do the same thing. You might say that pedophile women usually don't attract attention.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles are sexually frustrated

Once again, not true. Sexually frustrated people can be found in all categories - homophiles, heterophiles, pedophiles. What is true is that pedophiles can become sexually frustrated through not being able to have pedophile contacts.

They are not pedophile because they are frustrated, but they often become frustrated because they cannot express themselves as pedophiles.

MISCONCEPTION: Children who have pedophile experiences become homosexuals as a result

Whether one is homophile or heterophile seems to have nothing to do with pedophile experiences. Research has shown that the proportion of heterophiles and homophiles among people who, as children, had had pedophile contacts is just the same as among people who had no such childhood contacts.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles are child rapists

Rape is first and foremost a crime of violence. It is a violent crime committed in the area of sexuality.

Rape occurs, unfortunately, amongst heterosexually oriented people, but it is not considered a typical expression of heterosexuality. It is the

same for pedosexuality: as a rule rape is not part of it. If it does occur - and fortunately this happens very seldom - it is a crime which has nothing to do with pedophilia as such.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles are child murderers

You cannot really call this a misconception; it is more of a slander. Very, very seldom does a pedophile commit murder. When it does happen, it is often out of fear that his or her pedophile contact will be discovered. Many crimes are committed out of fear of being caught and punished. Someone who steals can become a murderer for this reason, as can a pedophile. To repeat: this happens very, very seldom, and when it does it is caused by fear of discovery (and thus punishment), and thus cannot properly be said to have anything to do with pedophilia.

MISCONCEPTION: Pedophiles are mentally disturbed

Amongst pedophiles you find every sort of person. Some seem 'different,' some normal. But it is hard to say precisely what 'different' and 'normal' really are. Being different does not necessarily mean being mentally disturbed. Hurting your fellow human is certainly a disturbed way of behaving. Looked at in this way, you can justly say that 'normal' drivers who operate their cars so irresponsibly that they make other people victims of traffic accidents are disturbed. To be different and to think differently are not the same as to be disturbed.

THE CAUSES OF HARM

We have just been talking about what causes harm. Many people think that pedophile contacts are harmful. Is that so?

Research has been done on this question, both in this country and abroad. No study which we have seen indicates that pedophile contacts are harmful in themselves, where no coercion or force have been involved. But, in our culture, we usually cannot consider just the actual contacts themselves. If they lead to other things, there might well be a lot of harm.

First is the harm which can be done by the parents of a child who has contact with a pedophile man or woman. When they discover this, the parents often react in panic. They become furious or outraged. Such a reaction, caused by not knowing what pedophilia really is, is harmful to the child. What the child has experienced as normal, as love and friendship, suddenly is turned into something dirty, something evil.

Then there is harm caused by contact with police and the courts, which often follows the discovery of a pedophile relationship. An investigation in the setting of a police station gives any child the feeling that something

terrible has happened. It also has terrible consequences for the child to feel that he has betrayed a best friend with his testimony and thus helped put this person in prison. The feeling of guilt for having done so may haunt the child for the rest of his or her life.

The reactions of society can cause great harm to the child. But society can also hurt itself. In the final analysis, it must be said that we in society damage ourselves by our reaction to pedophilia. It is a reaction which is born of prejudice and misunderstanding. It is a reaction which arises because adults are unable to deal with their own sexuality, especially where it involves pedophile feelings.

Thus sexuality becomes something guilty, something that is shoved into a dark corner, something dirty, something 'not done.' You create guilt feelings within yourself this way, feelings which have nothing to do with real guilt. Because of false guilt it is often difficult to recognize the things you have done for which you really are guilty, and to admit that guilt. That is harmful.

Much of the damage we described here comes from ignorance, from prejudice and misconceptions. If you persist in these prejudices and do not clear up these misunderstandings, then you hurt others, too. That is especially the case for newspapers with their inflammatory headlines, papers which sensationalize these things. It is also the case for people who, without reflection, allow themselves to be carried away by their own feelings and think that in doing so they are protecting children.

We must also mention the harm caused to people of a pedophile nature. Through all of these prejudices and misconceptions, they are condemned to a half existence of not being themselves and cannot come to terms with themselves over their own feelings. If they do try to live according to their nature, they live in fear of discovery and punishment. This sometimes leads to tragedies - and these in turn reinforce the prejudices. It is a vicious circle. You can truly call this harm.

PEDOPHILIA IS PUNISHABLE

Sexual contact with children younger than 16 years of age is punishable [in The Netherlands]. In our Penal Code these contacts are often described as 'engaging in indecent behavior,' 'to have carnal relations,' and so forth.

More and more people in recent years want to see these laws revised. It is especially the 'age of consent' that they are calling into question.

The present laws are meant to protect children. The least of their effects is to protect children, and in reality they do more harm than good.

But children must be protected, mustn't they? Of course. The best protection for children is to enable them to protect themselves. Bringing up

a child with the knowledge and self-confidence so that he or she can do that is the best protection that you as a parent can give.

BAD EXPERIENCES

Not every sexual approach is pleasant for a child. At one end of the spectrum is the aunt who wants to hug and kiss a niece or nephew, but doesn't take into account whether the child wants it. Farther along the spectrum, a child can be confronted with someone who exhibits their genitals in front of the child, someone who wants to play with the child's genitals, or someone who asks the child to masturbate them.

Although it may not always be the case, generally in these situations the older person is acting simply to satisfy their own sexual needs. He or she is not interested in a mutual contact and does not take the child's needs or wants into account.

It's rare that such serious things occur, but it can happen that an adult tempts a child with promises or rewards in order to have sexual contact with them. Sometimes adults force children into sexual acts, and sometimes even use violence to do so.

Children can be very upset by bad experiences like these. They don't always easily get over them again. It is beyond dispute that damage has been done in a case like this.

But once again: in by far the vast majority of sexual contacts between adults and children, there is no question of violence or compulsion.

The "seduction" of children is also relatively rare. But it is best to pay very close attention to whether a child is really acting out of his or her free will. Children have less power than adults and it is often easier to mislead them than it is to deceive adults.

It is very important that children feel secure enough to tell their parents about such bad experiences. That means that if your child comes to you with such a report, you must try to remain calm. That will not be easy. But it is very important for children who have had a bad experience, that their parents not panic. That only upsets the child more. Only if parents are unable to cope with the situation should social workers or psychiatrists be called in.

One should only consider calling in the police in very serious cases. Having a child undergo police interviews can sometimes cause more damage than the initial experience.

It is difficult or impossible to prevent bad experiences from happening. What can be done is to decrease the chance that a child will have such an experience as much as possible. Particularly with young children, parents should know where they are and what they are doing. Parents can also

prepare children for such situations by talking with them about them. It is important that children be taught that in situations like these, they should never do anything which they don't want to do.

Such problematic experiences will have fewer consequences when a child has learned at home to deal openly with sexuality, and already knows what an adult's body looks like. Good sex education now can prevent a lot of misery later!

ADVICE

Sexual contacts between adults and children do occur. When it is discovered that a child is having (or has had) such a contact, society responds, the parents respond, and sometimes the police must respond, too. It would be best if this could happen in a sober, considerate way, without prejudice. That is, however, asking a lot. Prejudices run deep among us; we are brought up with them and they are not easily overturned.

People have to deal with their emotions, and even when they know what is true it is often difficult to act contrary to how they feel. One can, however, try. We want to offer some advice which might help.

Advice to children

We can really say it all in one short sentence: never do anything you don't want to do. If you're not going to like something, you usually know that in advance. In such a case, don't do it. This has nothing to do with disobedience. You are disobedient when you do something you want to do but which you know you shouldn't do, or when you don't do something which you know it would be good for you to do. If children are honest with their parents, that is, if they say what they like and what they don't like, what they want to do and don't want to do, parents will know where they stand. That holds true for telling what you have done, where you are going and where you have been. If your parents know all these things they will have nothing to worry about.

Advice to parents

Many people find pedophilia very difficult to accept. However, you should at least attempt to understand why you feel this way.

Friendship between a pedophile and a child is no reason for panic or fear. Nor is there any reason for this, even if sexual contact is a part of the relationship. Trust your child. If your son or daughter finds the relationship good, don't destroy it. Children know very well what they themselves like.

Destroying such a relationship is simply not understood by a child.

It is best to be sure that children have a real home, a place where they feel safe, a place where they receive warmth and love. If these are present, it is unlikely that a child will seek a pedophile relationship through their lack at home, or will engage in such a contact in order to gain that warmth and love, and then accept the sexual relations as part of the bargain.

Frank, clear sexual information and education is very important for children. Ignorance breeds curiosity and secrecy. Children who can talk frankly with their parents find it much easier to tell them very honestly what they do and what they allow to happen.

Parents need not get upset by expressions of childhood sexuality, such as 'playing doctor.' Children are in no way hurt by sexual games in which they take part without compulsion. On the contrary, children can enjoy them intensely.

As we have repeatedly said, damage is almost always caused by improper reactions on the part of those around the child. Spare the child these traumas.

Do not go immediately to the police. If your child has a pedophile relationship, first try to make contact with the pedophile. Let the man or woman know that there is no question of any threat of punishment, police involvement and so forth, but talk with your child's friend. By doing so, you yourself will cause no violence. Calmly explain that you are troubled by what has happened. If really bad things have occurred - for example, physical violence or gross coercion - then you can always later go to the police.

Try to talk calmly about what actually happened. Keep to the facts and don't let yourself get worked up over what may never have occurred. For the rest, it is best, where problems arise, to talk with someone whose judgement you trust, and not to let your anger and fear lead you to take steps that you may later regret.

Advice to people with a pedophile orientation

Pedophilia is very difficult for many people to comprehend. People who cannot recognize these feelings in themselves, or who repress them, understand nothing about it.

It is very difficult for many pedophiles to accept their own nature and admit they are what they are. Fear of punishment, social condemnation, a lack of understanding on the part of others and difficulty in accepting the fact they are pedophile tempt such people into pretending that they are something else. The resulting behavior, although quite understandable, reinforces the common prejudices. Try to talk with others about your nature. You can do that very easily at meetings of pedophile workgroups. You can

also talk with other people whom you trust.

Try to talk openly and honestly with the parents of your young friend. If possible, acknowledge your pedophilia. Share your feelings with them, what your plans are, what you want. Usually that is impossible, but sometimes people find the courage, and that can break the vicious circle.

Don't panic if you are discovered, not even if the police come. Stay calm. There are many possibilities of legal help. You have a right to it. If you have contact with the police, immediately ask for legal assistance. You must always keep in mind that [in The Netherlands] you are not obliged to answer any questions.

As has already been pointed out, self-acceptance is very important; indeed, it is crucial. Only with self-acceptance will a pedophile be able to trust his own judgement and decide how he wants to live his life.

QUESTIONS

If, while you were reading this booklet, you got mad and thought:

You only say good things about all this filth!

Why do you call an act which is an expression of love filthy? Do you find your own sexuality filthy too?

It could be your child!

Have you ever thought that this applies also to pedophiles? Have you ever thought what it would be like if your brother or sister, father or mother, husband or wife were picked up for a 'morals crime'? All the forces of society cursing and condemning someone you love? Have you considered that you might hurt someone you love by thinking this way?

Am I supposed to accept all of this? Just let someone come after my child!

Aren't you talking a bit too much as if you were the owner of your child? Don't you see your child too little as an independent being who can have his own feelings and desires?

Very well, but I demand that my children are safe.

Of course you want to make things as safe as possible for your children. But are you sure that your child is unsafe in a pedophile relationship? Are you just as concerned about traffic safety for him? Or safety from atomic weapons? Or the effect of violence on television programs?

Remember that complete safety is never obtainable. This is true for traffic safety, for threats from militarism, and is also true for sexuality. But we should never exaggerate the dangers. Therefore it is not right to talk about danger and threats where there doesn't have to be a question of

harm.

The best protection you can provide for your child through good information and giving him or her a sense of self-confidence.

You can gloss over everything that way!
Is that really true?

AFTERWORD

Pedophilia is an emotionally charged subject. Many people can only barely accept it or cannot accept it at all. This is connected with the way we view of childhood and our uneasiness about sexuality.

In our society children are viewed as a frail, innocent beings, who must be led into adulthood by their parents. If we could regard children as people with their own feelings, who have minds of their own and are not anyone else's possessions, then perhaps pedophilia would seem less of a threat.

Sexuality is difficult to talk about in our society. It is still associated with feelings of guilt, with anxiety, and is often thought to be 'dirty.' So long as we have difficulty with our own sexuality, we will not be able to approach pedophilia in an open and unprejudiced manner.

What we can do is try to discover what disturbs us about pedophilia and what causes us to feel that way, and so come to a new understanding of this phenomenon.

In that enormous task this booklet is just a drop in the bucket. Law reform and, especially, the elimination of unjustified fear about pedophilia would be useful steps in the right direction.

VIII. Advice to Pastors

Selection by The Rev. Alje Klamer (1923-1986) from the *Handboek Pastoraat* (Pastoral manual; Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1985). Translated by D.H. Mader.

Pedophilia

Pastors are sometimes too intrusively curious. A pastoral counseling session is not an interview. A pastor may well ask questions, and acknowledge that there are things he doesn't know about. Then the roles are reversed and the pastor learns from the other. But in such cases the pastor must make it very clear why he is asking the questions.

With pedophilia, you as a pastor are indeed likely to be entering an area with which you are generally unfamiliar. If you are privileged enough to have a pedophile call on you, you could well be asking yourself, what should I say to someone like that? Then it is that the pedophile might take you by the hand in order to tell you what pedophilia is.

At this moment [1985] discussions of pedophilia are once again being pushed back out the public arena. That is happening under the influence of feminism. The argument goes something like this: a pedophile is a man who has gotten stuck at a non-adult level, and for lack of anything better just molests children. This once again exposes the male lust for power: if he cannot exercise his lust for power over women, he indulges it over children. That's why pedophiles must be eliminated.

People are upset by pedophilia, because it's not just about sexuality, but about children as well. We still always assume that children are asexual, dependent and easy to influence. An adult who seeks out a relation with a child is already, in advance of any actions, suspect of being someone who misuses his position. Years ago, when I was a member of the committee that worked on the report *Pedofilie in de Nederlandse samenleving* [Pedophilia in Dutch society; National Center for Public Mental Health, 1976], I believed that we certainly must pay attention to the needs of pedophiles, but that children must be protected against the superior power of adults. That was my bias then. I wouldn't put it that way now.

In my many contacts with pedophiles I have learned a considerable amount. I've learned that children are not as naive and

innocent as we think. Many children even take the initiative. I have also discovered that, if there is anybody who cares about children, that is the pedophile man or woman. Every time I encounter it, I am again surprised at how a pedophile enters into the world of children. To see it is really moving. In saying this, I am not romanticizing them. To a pedophile, there is nothing worse than abusing one's power as an adult. They are deeply hurt when a child is killed by a pedosexual. As it is, this is actually very rare. Children are many times more likely to be killed by drunk drivers or by their own parents.¹ A pedophile finds it unthinkable that a child could be killed. I have heard them say it themselves: that can only be done by someone who is extremely sick. For years, I was invited to lecture at the police academy about pedophilia. Every time, the policemen came back with that one, same, terrible story.

You should not be ashamed if, as a pastor, you feel out of your depth when encountering a pedophile. But you should go on with the contact. The pedophile is there because he has hit a dead end because of his love for children, because of our society, because of his fears, because of the law (which is a constant threat to him). When a pastor has enough courage to recognize his own uneasiness, without losing sight of the needs of the other, and if the pastor is willing to find out what really animates the other, a lot can happen. The other discovers that the pastor is willing to join him in his pilgrimage.

I think it is also important that the pastor has deep sympathy for the fears of parents. Parents must be able to express these. Our society stokes these fears from all sides, particularly if there has been something happen to a child. I once had contact with a mother. She and her husband were approached by someone who loved their eleven-year-old son. He wanted the elders to know. He did not want that friendship with the boy unless the parents knew. If he could not be open about it, he would withdraw. The parents ultimately decided that they had nothing against this. She dealt with the question very reasonably and with a high sense of reality. Sometimes it can happen that a family blows up in such a situation. The police are not always equally sensitive, and sometimes make things much worse than they are.

If an adult abuses his or her position of authority, they must be punished. When anyone older tries to have contact with a child against the child's will, that is wrong. Pedophiles themselves agree about this. Sexual contacts may only take place if the child wants them, and only in ways which the child wants. And don't forget that children often anticipate adults, and provoke them. Very often these contacts are matters of love and deep friendship, and one should not read any

nastiness into them. Very often, the children take whatever happens in stride and there is no damaging influence on their sexual development. And on the side of the pedophile, his sexual desire for a child usually disappears when the child enters puberty. Then the pedophile's sexual desire is transferred to another child; that is the restlessness of their existence. But his affection for the child does not disappear, and it is not unusual for them to remain in contact, sometimes as long as they both live.

On a television program hosted by Koos Postema, on which I once appeared, there was a man whose life had earlier, when he was a boy, seemed to be going nowhere. Then he came to know an older, pedophile friend. That relationship gave him back his self-confidence. He owed a lot this fatherly friend. He was now able to enter medical school, where otherwise he would have ended up in manual training. There was no longer a sexual relationship - indeed he had a girl friend - but there remained a very deep friendship. He referred to the man as his father.

Of course, there are also less pleasant pedophiles, sexually disturbed boys, hopeless cases. Who wouldn't be, if you were always being told that what you were doing was dirty, that you yourself are perverted?

At this moment, the news media are brimming over with items about child pornography. In the same breath, pedophilia is always mentioned. Whenever I hear or see that I think, how would people react if pornography were that easily coupled with heterosexuality? How does a person who has accepted himself as a pedophile, who has a preferential love for children, and wants nothing more than that the child with whom he has an intimate relationship should be happy - what does such a person make of such upsetting and insinuating press reports?

Let those of us in the pastorate keep our wits about us. This is particularly necessary when we come into contact with people who test our limits as pastors. Let us listen more carefully to their own stories than to the inflammatory press reports all around us. That is also true for incest - until recently the story in the media. Of course it is important to collect information, if only to unmask all sorts of misunderstandings and prejudices. But I am always extra on my guard when I note that this "information" is apparently out to prove something - for instance, that males are by nature power hungry and only interested in satisfying their appetites. Then there is something else going on.

Whenever something is being judged all black or all white, with no grey areas, it is the job of the pastor to pick his way through all the

jamming signals and listen to the individuals' stories. What has the other person to tell me? Of course we always may and must point to the boundaries, to responsibility, but always this must be done out of understanding of the other.

Incest is found in diverse forms - for instance, between mothers and daughters, or mothers and sons. Every time it occurs the circumstances are different, and it rarely agrees with the image that we are given. I know of an incest relation between a father and his daughter, of which the daughter has good memories and through which she, as she herself says, learned what it means to love. But immediately a voice inside us says, that can't be, it shouldn't be permitted, it must have had bad results. Pastors too have those inner voices. Such voices and feelings can be seductive, if we give them priority and as a pastor no longer take the other person seriously. We would rather that what we hear agrees with the going opinions.

I hope that pastors, with all their questions and reservations, will reflect on the story in Mark 2:14ff, when someone, for instance a pedophile, comes to them. Jesus comes up to the toll house where Levi, son of Alpheus, is sitting. Marie van der Zeyde, in her translation, tells us, "And there, as he passed by, his glance fell on Levi, son of Alpheus, as *he was*, sitting at his post in the toll house."² Jesus saw him enmeshed within his own story, like a spider in the midst of his web. Others might have said, look, there he is again, the tax collector, the bloodsucker. But Jesus saw him in the context of his whole story, and that enabled him to say to him too, follow me. It was as much as to say, 'That is your story, I am with you. I would let you know that you are not what others think of you, and not even what you think of yourself, but that you are an entirely different kind of person.'

A pastor must similarly see a person in the midst of his own story. He should let the pedophile, who has run up against the dead end of the condemnation of society and his own self-condemnation, see that he or she, with their love for children and the children's love for them, can go further. It is precisely the pastor who is the one who must join such a person in searching for a way forward in society in which it is darned hard to live as a pedophile.

1. Despite impressions generated by the media - and see Klamer's comments on the role of media below - his assertions are still true. For instance, statistics released for Great Britain by the BBC in August, 1995, after three child murders had taken place in England and Wales within a week, indicated that over the last decade there were an average of 86 children murdered in Great Britain per year, that this figure had remained stable over the whole period, and that an average of only five of these

murders each year were committed by persons outside the child's family circle or close acquaintances (i.e., mothers, fathers, step-parents, uncles or aunts, or neighbors babysitting or child-minding with the parent's permission). In short, while the lurking sex-attacker remains parents' prime fear, a British child is 16 times more likely to be killed by a family member or trusted extension of the family than by any outsider. Similar figures apply for The Netherlands.

2. No commonly available English translation includes this phrase which Klamer is emphasizing, but it is indeed present in the Greek, in the force of the accusative article *tōv* following Levi's name, which they do not render.

IX. "ONE IN CHRIST JESUS"

The following is the text of a sermon delivered June 11, 1995, to the English-speaking congregation at the Pauluskerk by the Rev. D.H. Mader, on Acts 8:1-8 and Galatians 3:26-28. It is presented to provide some theological and Biblical background for the Pauluskerk's ministry, in particular to sexual minorities.

"For you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Therefore there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither master nor slave, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26-28)

Thus St. Paul's ringing declaration of freedom and inclusivity in Galatians 3:28. Inclusion has been a theme of the gospel from the very beginning. Very close to the beginning of Matthew's version is the visit of the three wise men from the East; those from afar come to pay homage to their Savior. (Matt. 2:1-12) In Luke's story of the presentation in the temple, which occupies the same position at the beginning of his Gospel as Matthew's account of the visit of the Gentile seers, there is a parallel affirmation. The aged Simeon, who had been awaiting the arrival of the promised savior, calls the Christ "a glory to Israel, and a light to enlighten the Gentiles." (Lk. 2:32)

So it is not much of a step at all from the words of Simeon, speaking as he does of Jews and gentiles, to St. Paul, writing to the Galatians of Jews and Greeks. The first level of inclusion which St. Paul lifts up has been a part of the gospel from the start; the good news of inclusion which Paul declares to the churches in Galatia was in fact first voiced by Simeon in the temple.

The ancient world was strictly divided upon many lines, but one of the most prominent and thorough was the division between "us" and "them," between insiders and outsiders. It was enforced by every people. For the Greek, the division was between the Hellenes, insiders to the Greek language and culture, "us," and the *barbaroi*, barbarians, those culturally in the dark, "them." For the Jew, it was between Israel, those who are on the inside of the covenant, within the light, "us," and the gentiles, those in outer darkness, outside the covenant and grace of God, "them." Now, with some difficulty one could change one's status:

there were converts to Judaism, or by learning Greek and accepting Greek cultural usages, one could escape from barbarianism. But that was merely to accept the divisions, to move from the one side of the chasm to the other, not to believe in inclusion, to suggest that there was, or should be, no distinction. Even if one did cross the line, change one's allegiance, one never quite had it made like one who had been born there: the Greeks, though flattered that the Romans adopted their Greek language and uses, still looked down on them, and Jewish proselytes were never quite as "inside" as those who had been born into the covenant. Insiders were insiders, and outsiders were outsiders, and ne'er the twain should meet. That was the way life was.

Before we smile and feel superior to that, we should pause to remember some of the divisions that the world perpetuates today. Race, for starters - which meant less in the ancient world than it means today, for both the categories of "barbarian" and "gentile" contained the majority of people, black and white alike. Then there is language, although English, not Greek, is today the "lingua franca" - *lingua franca*, ironically, a term left over from a day when the language of culture was French; but no matter what our language, those who jabber in another tongue are never quite like us in our esteem, and the thick accent of the foreigner is as much a source of humor today as it was for Greek comedy. Nationality divides us: need me mention "ethnic cleansing"? Economics also divides us: the First World and the Third World, into which the Second World has slid. If anything, today we have less a neat division between insider and outsider than one between insiders and many outsiders, one "us" and many "thems."

But there can be no room for such thinking among Christians. This has nothing to do with creation - either the idea that we are all created by the same God, or the idea that we are all created equal, no matter how enshrined that may be. For while the first is certainly true, the second is patently false: human beings are simply not created equal, though we must strive for laws treating them as though they were. The truth is that we are all different, and therefore we are unequal. As individuals, we are different, and therefore unequal, in intelligence, in talents; some are given more and others less, and the imbalance is not always compensated in some other area. At the social level, it is clearly false to think that, even if they should be of the same race and gender, and of the same intelligence, and have access to the same schools, a child born into a millionaire's family and a child born into a welfare family will have equal chances in life. The simple truth is that we are not equal in our creation by God, and the cradles in which we are laid are not equal.

But we are equal somewhere else. We are all equal when we stand at the foot of the cross; somehow no one seems to stand taller there. It does not matter there how much money or power or social status one has, or how many talents or how much intelligence, or what one's race or nationality or gender is. We are all equal at the foot of the cross, for everyone must come there for forgiveness, for salvation. And because God's forgiveness there is available to everyone - because God so loved the world that he sent his Son, that ALL who believe in him should have life and life abundant (John 3:16) - we can no longer keep up the distinctions between people that God has refused to recognize. God, in Jesus Christ, has unified us at the foot of the cross, and we cannot, if we accept His gift of forgiveness, divide people any longer, for we are all God's children, through faith, in union with Jesus Christ, as Paul said.

Thus it is that finally, in the last analysis, a system like apartheid, or racism of any sort, is a heresy. Now, that may seem to sound a bit whimpy to say that the most basic thing wrong with a system like apartheid is that it is heretical - of all the things wrong with an evil like systematic racism, to condemn it for being theologically wrong! - but that is the truth. Racism goes wrong when it denies the truth of God's inclusion, of equality in Jesus Christ, and all of the other horrible results stem from that. Any system which perpetuates human divisions and inequality is a denial that Jesus Christ died for all - and no Christian, if he or she really believes that Christ died for all, can tolerate it. This mentality, like all systems that enforce human inequality, is wrong because it creates a "them" and an "us", when Christ abolished such thinking; such systems are wrong because they are sin.

But if Paul's world was divided vertically into an "us" and a "them" through divisions like Jew and Gentile and Greek and barbarian, sundering peoples from fellowship with one another, it was no less divided horizontally, within both the "us" and the "them," by another division, one which was just as radical and as deep. This was the division between slave and free, between those who were their own masters, and often the masters of others, and those who were mastered; between those who had power and those who were powerless, between those with property and those who *were* property.

Slavery was endemic to the ancient world. The captive in war was enslaved - whole cities or nations, on occasion; the poor were enslaved for debts, or sold one of their children into slavery for a year's living; those born to slaves remained slaves; even the otherwise free man or woman, perhaps a slave owner themselves, who had the misfortune to meet up with a pirate or slave caravan could suddenly change their

status, if they did not have friends or family to buy them back out of slavery.

No one in the ancient world could imagine a world without slaves, any more than we today can imagine a world without poverty. Nowhere in the Bible is the institution of slavery questioned; nowhere is it suggested that the institution of human slavery is anything other than part of the God-given, natural order. To question its existence - had anyone thought to do so, which they did not - they would have been questioning the very foundations of the social order, as laid down by our Maker. The lives of the patriarchs assume slavery - the story of Hagar, for instance, and the story of Joseph's sale into slavery in Egypt by his brothers; the law of Moses assumes slavery, and merely regulates it. Whatever he seems to suggest there in Galatians, Paul himself elsewhere lays down the rule, "Slaves, obey your masters." (Col. 3:22) Slavery was as much a part of the "God-given" "natural" order as today many still assume that the "God-given" subordination of women is, or the "God-decreed" abomination of homosexuals. But there are at least voices today which question these assumptions, while to the best of my knowledge, it was not until the 17th century, among the Puritans and Quakers, that anyone made a theological argument against slavery. As late as the 1850's, a sermon, widely reprinted and discussed at the time, was preached from the pulpit of the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Holy See of American Dutch Reformed thought, which justified the existence of slavery on Biblical grounds, and insisted that attempts at its abolition, which here being made by certain misguided elements among Christians, were a denial of God. And what's more, in its own terms, there is certainly no flaw in that sermon, as there is not a single text in the Bible you can point to which, on its face, would contradict the conclusion of the good dominie.

But all this coexists with quite another stream in the Bible - more a torrent, indeed, than a stream - of citations that God is not fair, that God is not even-handed in his dealings with mankind - and that His bias is against the rich and the powerful and for the poor and oppressed. The key experience for ancient Israel, their formative experience, that which made them what and who they were, had been their experience as slaves in Egypt, and God's liberation of their forefathers when he heard their cries. And that set in motion in Israel, and particularly in the prophetic tradition, a certainty that, while it did not question the institution of slavery, did make it clear that God was on the side of the slave, the poor, the powerless, whomever they might be. From that time onward, no member of the community of Israel could hold another Israelite in

perpetual slavery, and the foreign slave, while he and his children could be slaves forever, were to be given the same rights - for instance, the day of rest - which the Israelites themselves enjoyed.

To be sure, this was not always observed, but two of the three persons in the "Holy Trinity" of the Old Testament prophets - the orphan and the stranger within your gates, who along with the widow make up that trio whose welfare is always enjoined - these two were particularly subject to slavery, and care for them is particularly stressed as the prophets denounce injustice against them, denounce those who would "sell" the poor for the price of a pair of shoes. (Amos 2:6) And Mary, in her song of joy after the annunciation of Jesus' birth, is not reticent about what the work of God means: "He brought down the mighty kings from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich empty away." (Lk. 1:53) There is no question that God, in his demand for favorable treatment for those without power in society, sets Himself and his law firmly as a bulwark for the slave, the poor, the powerless. But alas, just as certainly, the institution of slavery is never questioned.

Even in the New Testament, in the text which most certainly involves a slave - Paul's letter to Philemon, asking for freedom for Onesimus, Philemon's slave who had run away and joined Paul and proved of value to him - even here, Paul's request is not based on a challenge to the system of slavery, or even its existence among Christians, but on Onesimus' particular use to him. Paul does not say, "Look here, Philemon, it is no longer fitting that you should hold another Christian brother as a slave," but rather "I ask, because of his particular use to me, that you free him and send him back to me."

And yet, and yet, this same Paul, who decrees "Slaves, obey your masters" and will not question slavery as an institution in his plea to Philemon, this same Paul can write to the Galatians, "in Christ, there is neither slave nor master." Is it that Paul is merely speaking metaphorically here, as the dominie in New Brunswick suggested when he dismissed this passage a century and a half ago? Or could it be that Paul has indeed sighted something which he does not yet comprehend, of which he does not yet understand the ramifications? Paul surely understood that the work of Jesus Christ had abolished the distinction between Jew and Greek; he understood its ramifications, and made it the cornerstone of his ministry. I believe that he here glimpsed the fact that the same principle - that at the foot of the cross, where we must all come for forgiveness, there can be no distinctions among persons - that this principle must also apply to other divisions as well as ethnic and

racial divisions, that it applies as well to divisions of wealth, of power. What Paul had seen, he would not follow up; it was a step too great for him in his day. And yet, although every word of scripture was against it, he has seen the truth of Christ, the truth revealed in the saving work of Christ: that because Christ died for both master and slave, both the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless, they too were now equals.

Brothers and sisters, the Bible is not the Word of God. Accustomed as we are to calling it the Word of God, accustomed as we are to venerating it as such, it is not. The Word of God, as the first lines of the Gospel of John make clear, is Jesus Christ himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God; all things were made through the Word, in whom was life, and the life was the light of mankind, and that light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5) This passage is not about a book, but about the Christ, in whom God is revealed, and whose story is taken up in that book. As Martin Luther said, that means that at best the Scriptures are the manger in which the Word of God is laid, to be displayed and seen by the world - and, as Luther also went on to say, there was more than a little straw in that manger.

Though not a word of scripture would speak against slavery, though in its every part the Bible approves the ownership of one person by another, the truth of Christ which it reveals refutes all that. The Gospel of John, which calls the Christ the Word of God, also comes as close as any other text to Paul's brief realization in Galatians, when John has Jesus say to his disciples, on the eve of the crucifixion, "No longer do I call you slaves, but friends." (John 15:15) John too saw that what Jesus was about to do made all persons brothers and sisters - and brothers cannot hold their brothers slaves, brothers and sisters should not turn away while another member of the family suffers or is homeless. It is no longer a matter of justice or fairness, but of love. As surely as the cross wiped away the divisions of Jew and Greek, Greek and barbarian, of race and ethnicity, of "us" and "them," it also refutes the divisions of economic and power inequalities. In Christ, we are one family, and must live as such with one another. We must use what power we have not to oppress, but to seek the good of others.

Now we reach the third level of Paul's great declaration of inclusion: Neither male nor female. It is curious that Paul should have listed them in this order, for this last level of inclusion is one which has not yet to this day been realized by the church. Paul, in his own day, saw the implications of "neither Jew nor Greek" before the cross; it was close to 2000 years later before the church finally came to realize, much to its

shame, that whatever the scriptures said about slavery, that before Christ, at the foot of the cross, that was not possible. But sexism, in all its forms, is something with which we have not yet really begun to struggle; issues such as the ordination of women and the role of homosexuals in the church are far from begun, much less resolved.

As with slavery, the Bible is clear enough about the role of women and homosexuals. For women, one is scarcely a chapter and a half into Genesis when the basic theme of women's subordination is sounded. God names man; one who gives a name to another controls that which is named; therefore the naming of Adam is a sign God is superior. But Adam, man, names the beasts - and Eve. In terms of this dynamic of naming, women, like the beasts of burden, are inferior to men. Jewish laws and marriage customs assume the same: a man buys a wife from her father, females being little more than property; and perhaps most scandalously, if an unmarried woman is raped, her father receives a payment for "damaged goods," and she must marry her rapist! (Deut. 22:28-9) In the New Testament there is St. Paul's well known, though admittedly personal instruction that he will not permit a woman (or wife, as the Greek actually says) to speak (or preach, as the Greek actually says) in any of his churches. (I Tim. 2:12) But compared to the Old Testament's sublime denial of personhood, that restriction is minor. And it must be noted that in the Greek of the very same passage in which Paul writes "neither male nor female," almost in the very same dip of the pen he writes that in Christ we are all sons of God: no daughters need apply.

The church has of course merrily gone all this one better: I recall one brother, in the Synod debate the year that women's ordination was finally accepted in the Reformed Church in America, holding aloft his Bible and announcing, "If Jesus Christ had intended women to give communion, he would have had a woman at the Last Supper!" No one pointed out that by the same logic, apparently Jesus didn't intend women to receive communion either - though one other minister did point out that by the same reasoning, if God had intended men to preach the resurrection, he would have had one at the empty tomb on Easter morning!

As a matter of fact, Jesus' own practice does soften the scriptural image somewhat. To this day, in Orthodox Jewish synagogues, women are not permitted to participate in worship; they must sit in the balcony, behind a screen or curtain. Contrast that with Jesus' commendation of Mary for sitting at his feet as he taught (Lk. 10:42), and you can begin to see how revolutionary he was. Or again, in Jesus day, as in Moslem

society today, to approach an unfamiliar woman was, for a man, a distinctly questionable action; it was practically a declaration on the part of the man that he assumed her to be a woman of easy virtue. Yet Jesus vaults both that barrier, and the barrier between Jew and Samaritan, when he engages the woman at the well st Sychar in a dialogue about salvation. (John 4:7ff) That is what so shocks the disciples when they return and find the two talking. Jesus is repeatedly unconventional in his insistence that women were persons, that they had a spiritual life. And yet, when you compare that with the powerful affirmation of subordination in Genesis, and the explicit instructions of Paul, it doesn't even come close to evening out.

As far as the Bible goes, the story for the homosexual is equally clear. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are unsparing in their condemnation of male homosexual practices - and the New adds the only condemnation of lesbianism known in the ancient world. (Rom. 1:27) As with Paul's words about women/wives speaking/preaching, it must be noted that all this is not quite as straightforward as most Bible translations make it. There is no word for the concept of homosexuality in Hebrew or Greek; what the Old Testament condemns is, by a study of the words used, male prostitution in the service of fertility cults, or the action of placing semen in an "unsuitable" place, in a law text which deals with the proper respect for blood, milk, semen and other "vital" fluids. (Lev. 18:22, 20:13)¹ What Paul condemns in the New Testament, in Corinthians, is, like other Old Testament passages, "effeminacy." Neither this, nor cultic prostitution, has much to do with homosexuality as it exists today in Western society. It also must be said that as far as the Bible is concerned, on the authority of Ezekiel, the crime for which Sodom was condemned was not what we today term sodomy, but pride and the failure to minister to the poor, and in particular travelers (Ez. 16:49). Yet when all this is said, without any doubt, those who have sexual relations with their own sex are, for whatever reason, consigned, along with a host of others including cross-dressers and eunuchs (Deut. 23:1) to the class of abominations before God, and cast out of Israel.

So, scripture has spoken. Women are secondary beings, and homosexuals are abominations. Of course, scripture had also spoken about slavery, and found it a part of God's order. And it enforced the division between Jew and Gentile, until Paul realized that before the cross, that was wiped away, that all of the vitriolic passages in the Old Testament against the Nations, the Gentiles, were left hollow by God's act of love in Jesus Christ. Paul said that many times; he spoke of slavery and sexism only a few. But, again, could he have glimpsed a

truth that the church and society were not ready to see, a truth that he himself was not ready to follow up?

There is one other passage which may shed light on this: the story of St. Philip the Apostle and the Ethiopian, in Acts 8. Back when Paul was still Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the church, Philip, in the aftermath of the stoning of Stephen which this Saul of Tarsus had organized, is led out of Jerusalem and meets an Ethiopian eunuch returning from Jerusalem to his own land. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God, and was reading Isaiah on his way home. He was clearly a "God fearer," but there was no way he could ever have been a Jew. Quite apart from his ethnicity - for he could have become a convert, and there were in fact Jewish colonies in Egypt and Ethiopia - he had one clear disqualification: Deut. 23:1 forbids a man not sexually whole from being a part of God's people. Actually, in a sense, the Ethiopian eunuch fits into all three of Paul's categories in Galatians: as an Ethiopian, he was almost certainly ethnically a Gentile; he was a slave; and he was a sexual outcast, along with the others who because of their sexuality were barred from participation in Israel. And yet before Paul was Paul, this gentile was converted; for him there was neither Jew nor Greek. Although a slave to the Queen of Ethiopia, he becomes a full citizen in the kingdom of God; for him, there is neither slave nor master there. And finally, his sexuality - or to be more precise, his lack of it - no longer mattered. There was no longer male and female, and the prophecy in the 56th chapter of the same book he was reading, "Eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose to do my will and hold fast to my covenant, shall receive from me something better than sons and daughters: a name within my own house and within my walls" (Is. 56:4-5) has come true. For the Ethiopian eunuch, before the cross, it no longer mattered what race or nationality or language was his, it no longer mattered where he stood in society, and it no longer mattered what his sexuality was: in his baptism he put on Christ and became a child of God.

Can we apply this story to others whose sexuality, according to scripture, bars or restricts them from participation in the covenant community: to women, who could not be full participants, and sometimes cannot to this day, and to people whose sexual preference or nature means they could not - and can not - participate at all? The promise in Isaiah makes it plain that the only criteria for being a part of the people of God are faith in the covenant and a willingness to fulfill the will of God - which Isaiah summarized elsewhere (1:17) as "pursue justice and champion the oppressed, give the orphan his rights and plead the widow's cause."

That these criteria of faith and acts of justice and mercy toward others are the whole of the criteria is also suggested by the account of the healing of the centurion's slave boy (Matt. 8:1-13; Luke 7:1-10). Although it is a controversial reading of the text, it is possible to understand the Roman officer's relation to the boy as the pederasty of the ancient world, and as we know, Jesus not only praises the officer's faith, but grants his request for the healing, suggesting that it is less an individual's sexuality than their faith and general attitude of love and concern for others that matters in the eyes of Jesus.² The standards for persons of every sexual persuasion are exactly the same: that all relations be responsible, not promiscuous or exploitative, not merely using a partner for one's own sexual satisfaction, but valuing them - exactly the same standard which the church maintains for heterosexuals. Because of the cross and the grace of God which is revealed there, all bars to the kingdom of God are removed - save only the response of loving others, which is required of all those who respond to God's love.

That is a radical proposal: but perhaps all three parts of Paul's discovery were deep, and we, because two of them were navigated before our day, just don't appreciate how radical they were. The elimination of all human divisions at the foot of the cross - those of race and nationality, those of insider and outsider, those of class and wealth, of power and status, of slave and master, of free and unfree, of sex and gender: that is a truly radical reordering of our world. The role of the church, the people of God by faith in Christ Jesus, is to be the crucible in which that occurs.

1. See Rabbi M.S. Cohen, PhD., "The Biblical Prohibition of Homosexual Intercourse," in: *Journal of Homosexuality* 19:4 (1990), 3-21, for an analysis of these passages in Leviticus.

2. See D.H. Mader, "The *entimos pais* of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10," in: *Paidika* 1:1 (1987) 27-39, reprinted in: *Studies in Homosexuality*, Vol. 12, *Homosexuality and Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Garland, 1992), 223-235.

X. Discussion paper

During the work on the book *De andere kant van de medaille*, one of the KSA staff members who was assisting with the preparation of the manuscript of Rev. Visser's contribution, translated here as Document IV, wrote up a series of questions this text raised for her and submitted them to Rev. Visser. He in turn referred them for an answer to Rev. Mader, who also functions as an advisor to the church's sexuality committee, the Pastor Doucé Group. Her questions and his answers are presented here. It should be understood that this is essentially "thinking out loud on paper," an internal discussion piece, designed to stimulate further interchange of ideas, and makes no pretense to providing authoritative answers. It is shared here in that spirit.

When people talk about pedophilia, they almost always talk about males. In your piece, although "he" could also mean "he/she," it appears from the context that "the pedophile" is male. What is the proportion, in reality? And if a discussion of pedophilia would begin from the female pedophile, would pedophilia then be more threatening, or less? Affection between women and children is, after all, presupposed, but what about sexuality?

The question of women and pedophilia is a politically fraught issue. For the best part of the last 20 years, the "official" line from the women who led the attack on child abuse was that women could not be pedophiles: pedophilia = exploitation and abuse, and exploitation and abuse = male. Women, with their natural, maternal instincts (not to mention their history as victims of men) were the natural allies of children. It was unthinkable that a mother, with her intimate contact with children, could feel any sexual attraction to them. (I know, when you stop to think about that assertion, there is something wrong there - perhaps the old Victorian thing about how "women don't have feelings like that" - but it was the argument.) I have heard women who have "come out" as pedophiles tell how they were abused by their feminist "sisters" as mistaken and "sick," for claiming to be something which is both wrong, and male.

Within the past couple of years the landscape has begun to shift, particularly in response to high-profile cases like that of Mary Kay LeTourneau, a thirty-something California teacher who had an affair with a 13-year-old boy in her class, which came to light when she became

pregnant with his child. Sentenced to 7,5 years in prison, she served only about nine months - extremely short by American standards for "child abusers" - before early release, having given birth to the child in prison. Just after her release on the condition that she not see the boy again, she was caught having sex with him another time, and sent back to finish her sentence. This encounter resulted in a second pregnancy, and she and the boy vow they will be married when she finally comes out, as he will be over 20 then. Faced with headline-grabbing cases like this, some in child protection institutions are now claiming that there may be as many women pedophiles "out there" as there are male pedophiles: all estimates of the number of pedophiles must be doubled. There is, of course, absolutely no hard evidence for this at all, just the logic that there are about as many women as men - but of course their budgets will have to be doubled - at least! - to deal with this vast new wave of female predators!

And then there were the French intellectuals like Rene Sherer and Guy Hocquenheim in the late 1970s who argued that all mothers were pedophiles, on the grounds that there is no difference between the sensual/erotic feelings a mother may have when feeling the smooth skin of her child and those a pedophile man has when doing the same thing to someone else's child, or the erotic feelings some women admitted to experiencing during breast feeding and a man's reaction to erotic touches from a child.

So there are somewhere between no, some and all women who are pedophiles. There has been no research into this at all. Certainly, in the present atmosphere, there is no queue of women just waiting to "come out" as pedophiles. And, just as lesbians were invisible for centuries because women were supposed to be intimate with each other, kissing when they met and walking arm in arm, allowing lesbians who did these things (as long as they didn't look too butch) to simply fade into the background of all other women, so too women who enjoy physical contact with children can walk up to a woman friend and talk to her on the street, having their hands all over the heads and shoulders of her friend's children, without attracting any attention for it - as he surely would if a man did something similar.

Even if a woman oversteps this line into actual sexual contacts, our society still doesn't want to see her as a "pedophile." The LeTourneau affair is a case in point. BBC recently showed a documentary on her case in which many of those interviewed defended her: she was not a molester, she was initiating a boy into sexuality, something women had done for centuries; even if it was a mistake, she didn't deserve this kind

of punishment, she was the biggest victim here, she had suffered enough, etc. Can you imagine a similar TV program about a man and a 13-year-old girl, or a man and a 13-year-old boy? No way. The issue becomes still more complicated when you note that there appear to be two groups of women "pedophiles": those who are attracted to young girls, and those who "initiate" young males. The only book I know on the subject, M. Sax and S. Deckwith, eds., *Op en oude fiets moet je het leren* (Amsterdam, 1992 = (in English) *Paidika*, Nr. 8, 1992) shows this division: it is largely devoted to retrospective accounts of girls' crushes on their teachers in girl's boarding schools, on girl scout leaders at scout camps, etc. - crushes in many cases returned by the adult women - but the title refers to the age-old practice of the father taking his son to a prostitute for sexual initiation. Needless to say, both these situations are judged by society differently from a man-boy relation, or a man-girl relation.

We frankly have absolutely no idea what the situation is in reality. We have no idea how many women have "pedophile feelings," or even what that means in view of definitions of women's sexuality. The politics of sexual abuse has probably kept women from talking about the issue: pedophilia has been a handy weapon to beat men with. It does appear that in general women "pedophiles" are perceived as less threatening, largely I suspect for the same reasons that lesbianism is less threatening to society than male homosexuality: what women do among themselves, or in service of men, doesn't threaten male supremacy. And because of social definitions, what is a "sexual touch" when performed by a man is seen as non-sexual, a natural, womanly gesture, on the part of a woman.

Perhaps the most we can say is that this all makes clear just how saturated the whole discussion of "pedophilia" is by feminist rhetoric, male privilege, and homophobia.

I must question why research is being done into the sexual experience of children. It seems to me it is not because the behavior of children suggests any reason to do so, but that it is motivated by the needs of adults. Why aren't there investigations about whether a ten year old would find it fun to drive a car? - because answering that wouldn't benefit adults! We put an end to child labor because we believed that children must be left to be children. Childhood lasts about 1/5 of your life (assuming an average lifetime of 75 years, and childhood lasting to 15). So you've got 4/5 of your life for sexual relations; what is the benefit to the child of experiencing these already in that first 1/5? Or why shouldn't the research on whether they have sexual feelings before their 15th or

12th year be based on the idea that these develop naturally by themselves, and there is still plenty of time to act on them?

I fear I must disagree here: there is basically no research being done into child sexuality. In fact, officially it doesn't exist. If a child shows "unnatural" sexual interest or knowledge, that is a sign of molestation: somebody has invaded the garden and planted something which should not have been there. In many parts of the United States, communities refuse to offer sex education because it is thought that unless we tell children about it, they won't have any interest in sex - and the longer we wait the better. Current revisionists of Freudian thought accuse him of having posited childhood sexuality only as a way - perhaps deliberate - of covering up evidence of molestations by men. One cannot investigate what doesn't exist - and thus it is not surprising that not only has there been no such research, but any attempt to do it would be blocked as "planting evil thoughts" in the heads of innocent children.

This does not stop us, however, from banging on about what is "natural" in this field. Remember Winnie Sorgdragger [a previous Dutch Minister of Justice] carrying on about how pictures of children in "unnatural" poses are child pornography? What, pray tell, is a "natural" pose? Do you think that children who have seen a Madonna or TAFKAP video, or whose mummies have a Chippendale's video around the house, don't have some conception of adult sexuality and seductive poses? Where are the baselines for determining this? There are none: but people are now being sent to prison for possessing "unnatural" pictures of children.

There has, admittedly, begun to be a small shift here too in the last couple of years; one now occasionally hears someone talking about how children do have a sexuality of their own, presumably different from that of adults, which adults should keep their hands off of. It's ok if children experiment sexually with one another, as long as there are not more than one or two year's difference - but "pedophiles," and maybe even sex educators, should keep out. Curious: if that is so, it is the only area of children's lives adults don't attempt to shape; can you imagine someone advising that kids learn to play football, and develop their latent sports interests, only from each other? On the other hand, though, that is admittedly pretty much what is going on, as surveys have shown that most sexual (mis)information children get comes from their peers. Still, I do have some sympathy for this view: a couple of years ago Dr. John Money was advising that sex education classes in school should begin teaching masturbation techniques as an answer to AIDS (he thought

people who could have fantastic orgasms by themselves would be less likely to engage in risky recreational sex). Based, however, on the job schools do of teaching unimportant things like reading and maths, I would be very reluctant to have them teach something important like masturbation! All that aside, even if we admit that children do have their own sexuality, we have no concept of what shape it takes or how (or if) it differs from that of adults. We assume, in part from reports from those same "evil" pedophiles, who are the only persons who actually have observed children's sexuality, and partly from inferences from the development of other childhood capacities, that it is more "playful," less goal-oriented and more experimental than that of adults, and less oriented to penetration (rather more like lesbian sexuality, perhaps?), as it is not oriented to procreation. But - as with the case of women pedophiles - we just don't know, and we aren't likely to find out any time soon.

I do share your cynicism about adults only investigating children's lives to the extent that they hope to exploit the children. Research into what children do, what children like and why they like it, seems entirely in the service of toy companies and food manufacturers. Maybe the reason there has been no research into child sexuality is because consumer capitalism has not yet figured out a way to exploit that area of their lives. But I think it a bit unfair to imply that pedophiles are lobbying for such research out of an interest in exploiting the children. As social pariahs, pedophiles don't have the power to get this research done, unlike breakfast food manufacturers, and they do have one other, even more immediate self-interest: they are being sent to prison for introducing sexuality to children, or vice versa, or for perverting that sexuality, and it is not unreasonable for them to ask that society examine the (probably false) assumptions on which this is being done.

Realistically, if we look back on our own lives, we will probably recognize that we did have some form of sexuality as children - "playing doctor" (or "nurse"), size contests and circle jerks among boys, etc. - and that, had sex not been so terribly taboo, our development might have been easier - or at least less fearful - for a bit more information and understanding from the adults around us. For that to happen, there is a good reason for adults to admit childhood sexuality exists, and to investigate it. Precisely the opposite is happening today: with all the hysteria about childhood sexuality and children's bodies, children are certainly picking up negative signals about their sexuality and bodies, which will confuse and damage them even more than the general sexual taboos of our time damaged us. Despite my waspish remarks about

schools above, and the distrust of adult motives I share with you, I think that such investigation, and education built on it, would be in the children's best interests. And it could also be beneficial to pedophiles in laying some of the misunderstandings and fears behind society's attitudes about them and their relations.

The nature of a pedophile relation is that it is a relation which cannot last. After all, a child doesn't remain a child forever. Thus a pedophile does not love a person - the affection, the love, the relation doesn't last once the child becomes an adult - but responds to the "unripe" sexuality. In television or radio programs where pedophiles are interviewed, again and again you hear them talk about how the attraction is focused on the fact that the sexual experience of the child still must be developed, and that the pedophile wishes to participate in that. It is clear from this too that pedophilia is an unequal relationship, rather than having the mutuality that there must be in any case in a relationship characterized by integrity.

I simply cannot agree with the basic assumption here, that it is the nature of pedophile relationships to be limited in duration. At the very least, there is perhaps no such thing as "a [single] pedophile relation," which has a single nature. In fact, there is probably no such thing as "a[n average] pedophile." While the term gets used for both, one major distinction is between "pedophiles" proper, individuals who appear to be attracted only to prepuberal children, and then often irrespective of whether the children are male or female, thus indicating that the attraction is probably for their being "children", and "boy lovers," men who are attracted to boys, and only boys, beginning sometimes, or even often, a year or two before puberty, but continuing the attraction through into adolescence. With some justification, your remark that the pedophile is in love not with the person, but with some characteristics - physical or emotional - of childhood is true for the former, and I will acknowledge that for many of these persons the interest - and relationship - does end with the appearance of signs of puberty. For boy-lovers, however, this is quite different: it is not at all unusual for the man to be attracted to the boy because of his personality, and for the relationship to continue many, many years into the boy's adulthood - in a somewhat altered form, to be sure, usually without continued sex, but none the less as a deep love relationship. In some cases, the man-boy relationship matures into a gay relationship; in others the man becomes more of a father figure, or older-brother figure, remaining in the boy's life as a trusted confidant or

friend. Needless to say, it is the "bad" relationships which come to notice in police complaints or on therapists' couches, while relationships like these remain largely invisible.

This is not, however, to say that even the "pedophile" relations by definition must be bad, wrong or harmful. To the extent that such a relationship is built around either "childish" sexuality, or built on "childish" characteristics, it will probably be one-dimensional - but there is nothing to say that a pedophile could not, through his/her love, be devoted to seeing the child develop and unfold through to puberty, just as the boy-lover can seek to help promote the development of the boy into an independent, mature adult. Again, I will readily admit that this does not happen in all boy-love relationships, and probably in far fewer "pedophile" relationships - but surely the social pressures on such relationships have something to do with that, too. Nor is there any reason that we should conceive only "long lasting" relationships ("till death do us part"?) as "good" and "moral" - particularly in a time when the average marriage is lasting for less than ten years. It is the content of a relationship, not the duration, which makes it good or ethical. Parenting doesn't last for ever, either, and a pedophile relationship, when functioning at its potential best, does have aspects of parenting about it. A relationship of limited duration - which all parties accept to be of limited duration - with goals set for that time span, can be perfectly moral and good.

As for pedophiles who will appear publicly to talk about themselves, and as for what they have to say (or are guided into saying by the interviewers), I can only answer that they must speak for themselves - and only themselves - and be understood as doing only that. Do keep in mind, however, that interviewers do not want to hear pedophiles or boy-lovers talk about their love for the children/boys - after all, that is "sweeping their own stoop" - but want to get the conversation around to sex, which is the "good stuff" that gets listeners turned on/tuned in. It's also been my observation that some of the people who promote themselves as "spokespersons" for pedophilia, particularly at a time as nasty as this, tend to be among the less stable and reasonable examples around; more cautious individuals think twice about the consequences, and don't give interviews.

Just as little as it is the duration of a relationship which makes it a relation with integrity, it is not "equality" (specifically equality of power, today) which makes it ethical or acceptable. If relationships in which the parties were of unequal power were to be condemned for that alone, we would have to be prepared to condemn all management-labor

relationships, government/citizen relationships, educational relationships, parenting, and just about all marriages. I frankly do not know of any totally equal marriages: there are differences of physical size (which is where one sometimes gets domestic violence), age, education, income or earning potential (which is why women get financially trapped in marriages they don't really want to continue), character and intelligence. Even if one wishes to argue that in most marriages these inequalities are less wide or less significant than the inequalities in any pedophile relationship, there are clearly some where they are not - and we still don't condemn them for that fact alone. Nor do we condemn parent-child or teacher-pupil relationships out of hand, although they possess precisely the same power imbalances as pedophile relationships. Rather, in all these other situations we properly recognize that it is not the fact of inequality of power, but what is done with that inequality of power that is the criterium - and/or we do our best as society to remedy the inequality by passing laws which empower the weaker partner, or offer them recourse to protection. I would argue that pedophile relationships be dealt with in precisely the same way: judged by their content, and not, as the one exception to all others, by their form; and the young persons be empowered to be able to look after their own interests, by education (we will, I think, be returning to this in your fourth point!) and by providing them with responsive protection when they do feel harmed or threatened.

I would also, however, urge that one look a bit deeper at the assumption of inequality of power in pedophile relationships. For one thing, it is by no means clear that the powerless party is always the younger person. I have known many cases where a worldly-wise teenager has taken advantage (usually financial) of a man's infatuation; the man theoretically may have the "power," but psychologically be unable to exert it. I know of other occasions which have led to tragedy when a young person has used the threat of their very real power to go to the police with their story - knowing that they would be accepted as total "victims" - to extort and blackmail, and even drive a man to suicide. Now, I know that we are talking here of teenagers, not five-year-olds - but remember, both are presently lumped together by law and public opinion. At the very least, we have got to begin separating things out according to realities, not reacting to things on the basis of fictions, legal or popular.

The second thing which must be said about power is that everything is not always what it appears to be. Curiously, I have found some of the people most understanding of pedophilia to be among the S/M

community - largely, I believe, because they are aware of precisely this fact. Someone looking at them from the outside sees a Master and a Slave, and assumes that power in a S/M relationship flows in that direction. In fact, if it is a functioning S/M relationship, power is really going precisely the opposite direction: it is the Slave who sets the limits for their games, and the Master is obeying the Slave's scripts. Similarly, someone unused to pedophilia looking in on a pedophile relationship sees the adult's power and the child's weakness: but it is not unusual for a pedophile to defer to the child's wishes, sometimes to an almost pathological degree. I suspect that this is often one of the attractions of such a relationship for the child: suddenly, for once, they are being treated as an active subject with a say or will of their own (if the relation is working well), or even finding that they are being granted power over an adult (which is where things can go off the rails). Curiously, sometimes when I have tried explaining this, I have had persons who a moment before had been condemning pedophiles for exerting power over children explode about the irresponsibility of pedophiles ceding power to children: an interesting comment on our adult assumption that we must always maintain power over children!

At any rate: I insist it is not the inequality of power that is the issue, but its use. The misuse of power - by a pedophile, parent, teacher, husband, government, employer or what have you - must be condemned. But each of these can also use the excess of power for the good and welfare of the weaker party: it is the use of the power, not its existence, that is the issue. What the actual balance of power is in a specific relationship, and how that power is used, is what must be examined. I do note that you also use the word "mutuality" [*wederkerigheid*] here: I would simply note that mutuality is not the opposite of an "unequal relationship" [*ongelijke verhouding*], but in fact may still exist in an unequal relationship. The test for a relationship is precisely not equality, but mutuality. Where mutuality is absent or severely distorted (compelled, or the result of severe, unrecognized symbiosis, etc.), the relation is ethically questionable; despite inequalities, where there is mutuality, it passes.

Defenses of pedophilia almost always focus on the contention that children indeed do have sexual feelings. Allowing pedophile relationships would, however, also imply that children are capable of making sound decisions for themselves at the age of, say, 12. If they were to be deciding whether or not to enter sexual relationships, something for which they would have to be able to stand firmly on their

own two feet, they naturally would be able decide on a lot of other things when they were 12. The discussion then becomes one of whether a child should or should not be viewed as an adult in the eyes of the law, and if the answer is yes, the age at which children are allowed to make decisions for themselves must be lowered. Even in that case, pedophilia would remain forbidden when it involved a sexual relation that still fell under this new lower age of consent. The age of consent must be set somewhere. Do pedophiles want the age of consent to be lowered?

You are absolutely right here: if we were to allow 12-year-olds to make decisions about their sexuality, it would mean that we would have to radically, indeed totally, revise our thinking about controlling them in many, many other things. May I suggest that this specter is precisely one of the reasons that this issue is so frightening to adults, particularly parents?

On the other hand, we do assume that 12-year-olds are capable of making other decisions which are at least as important as whether to masturbate with or be masturbated by somebody. For instance, that is the age at which, in the Dutch educational system, a young person is expected to make a decision about their future career which will lock them into a certain status for the rest of their life; if a young person opts for Lower Technical School, Higher Professional Education is forever ruled out. Of course, that decision is made in consultation with adults, particularly parents, and after preparation in the form of career choice education. But why shouldn't sex education be oriented to preparing young people to make decisions about relationships - decisions which, according to statistics on youth pregnancies and contraception use, they are making anyway, no matter what the law says about their ability to consent? And why shouldn't parents have a say in these choices? At one time, the knowledge and approval of the parents was one of the four principles the NVSH Pedophile groups urged on their members in forming relationships. In a society that did not go ballistic about such relationships altogether, it would still seem to be the right way to do things. Or for life-threatening medical procedures involving young people, many doctors are now suggesting that over the age of 12, unless there is some serious reason for not doing so, it should be the young person themselves who makes the decision to undergo the treatments, not their parents. Is the choice to submit to a life-threatening leukemia treatment less important than masturbation with a man-friend?

Then there is the whole issue today of "criminal children." Doesn't it seem strange that we are being told that children of 10 should be held

responsible and tried as adults for crimes they commit, but are incapable of deciding to engage in a sex act until they are 16, or maybe older? Or am I the only one who finds this inconsistent?

We are in a situation where the hegemony of the present definitions of childhood and the ages associated with these definitions blind us to the fact that throughout most of the world, throughout most of history, 12-year-olds were regarded as capable adults. Ages of consent for heterosexual acts and marriage, and ages of criminal responsibility, only went up from 12 or 13 - or younger - somewhat over a century ago. The whole definition of childhood, and of childhood "innocence," is less than three centuries old, at the most. Niel Postman, the British social historian, suggests the process began with the possibility for widespread literacy in the 1500s; as reading to acquire knowledge through books became more important, society extended "childhood", the period of education, to ever longer times, and social capability became confused with acquisition of information. He also suggests that one reason for the present crisis is that, as we enter a society without reading, where learning is audio/visual again, "children" are now "maturing" faster than they did in the age of the book, and presenting us with a dilemma by becoming socially mature long before our customs and mores say they should be. Or was it Rousseau who bequeathed to us the "innocent" child (along with the "noble savage") in the 1700s - the "child" who is the total opposite of the "adult": adults are sexual, children therefore are not; adults work, children therefore should not; adults lie and commit crimes, children therefore cannot; etc. James Kincaid, the American social and literary historian, makes a good case for this "child" being an invention of the early to mid-19th century, jelling into law only in the last quarter of that century and first quarter of the 20th. Or was it just that children had to be kept out of the job market to keep industrial capitalism from collapsing, so childhood and education was lengthened considerably? Whatever, this is all comparatively recent, and largely Western European. And it is all artificial, having nothing to do with the age at which young people are in fact capable of decision-making in moral or sexual matters - although, by refusing to allow them to make such decisions, we may be rendering them incapable. 18 and 21 are ridiculous - and so frankly is 16. 12 does seem altogether more reasonable - except for its consequences for so much else, as you note. For that matter, the Talmud set it at 9, and for most of its history, moral professors in the Western church argued for the age of 7 for the age of responsibility - the ability to tell right from wrong, to make moral decisions. Though not "scientific," this was based on critical observation

of children by confessors, and should not be dismissed lightly. I personally agree that there must be a line drawn somewhere - and to be provocative I would propose to agree with the doctors of the medieval church and set it at 7. Under that, it does seem to me that a child probably lacks life-experience to properly judge the motives of others and probable consequences of actions. Or one might argue for 7 as an absolute lower limit, with it being the responsibility of the pedophile to show that the child did have the capability to make those sorts of judgements under the age of 12, at which age it would be assumed (rightly, I think) that young persons did possess those capabilities.

Ah, but as you say, that would require adults to reassess so much of the rest of their relation to children... One of the changes would have to be educating children (in the home and in public education) not to obedience, but to equip them for decision-making and self-responsibility, to think for themselves and to stand on their own two feet. But then, yes, they might question us adults on all manner of things. And as adults, they might question the government and society on all manner of things. Far better, then, to teach them to "just say no" to some things, while just saying yes to authority in general.

So, yes, many pedophiles do argue for lowering the age of consent. Some ideological "purists" among them argue for the abolition of age of consent laws entirely, to be replaced by existing or new laws against rape and sexual assault. To the extent that those laws would need to be revised or written, I don't believe anyone has yet offered any practical proposals; usually the argument is that the present rape and assault laws would work fine as they stand, but when it comes to very young children by no means do all people classified as pedophiles accept the argument that such children do not constitute a special case, deserving special protection. But politically conscious pedophiles do also argue for empowering young people, in terms of general education about their sexuality, and in terms of social and educational attitudes that promote their self-reliance - and certainly do not argue that children and young people should be left unprotected if they are exploited or abused. Laws against actual (not assumed) abuse would then be even more important.

A word on the law in the meantime, until such a day comes. You are right here in suggesting that pedophilia ultimately is forbidden because it contradicts social attitudes. Yet because our society conflates the morally "wrong" with "harm" (if we say it is wrong, it must be harmful too), at present these laws and the sentences under them have become viciously harsh - death sentences, life sentences, life-long psychiatric incarceration, lifetime registration, registers of suspects with lifetime

bans from professions, the banning of all "erotic" images of children, with year's-long sentences and lifetime registration and career bans for having possessed them, etc., all being justified on the basis of the assumption of pervasive "harm" to children, an assumption for which there is no proof. (That is what the December conference is about: research shows that if general population samples are used, one discovers that there are many persons in society who when they were young had sexual experiences with adults, who do not consider themselves harmed in any way - indeed, the majority of males who had such experiences, and a sizeable minority of females.) Where there is individual harm, violence, coercion, misuse of power, yes: punishment should be based on the assessment of harm. But where there is no harm, merely a violation of social values, the present hysterical reaction is totally out of proportion.

Recommended Reading in English on pedophilia, the adults and children involved, and social attitudes about it:

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- Sax, Marjan and Deckwitz, Sjuul., eds.** *On an Old Bicycle: Erotic and Sexual Relationships between Women and Minors = Paidika* 2:4 (Nr. 8, 1992)
- Tindall, R.H.** "The Male Adolescent Involved with a Pederast Becomes an Adult," in: *Journal of Homosexuality* 3:4 (1978)
- Tsang, Daniel** (ed.) *The Age Taboo: Gay Male Sexuality, Power and Consent* Boston: Alyson, 1981
- Wilson, G.D. and Cox, D.N.** *The Child Lovers* London: Owen, 1983
- Wilson, Paul** *The Man They Called a Monster* North Ryde, NSW: Cassell, 1981

