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November 15, 1999

Watchtower Bible & Tract Society
25 Columbia Heights
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Re: Blood and upholding righteous standards

Dear Brothers

Back in 1998 I wrote you with questions regarding facets of our teaching and stance on use of blood. (See my letters dated 2/16/98 and 7/31/98) Those letters made clear my difficulty in teaching our present stance regarding medical use of blood. On this topic your last correspondence to me dated 8/24/98 said, "...it would be appropriate at this time to let the matter rest."

I fully realized the gravity of what I had addressed to you and understood that you perhaps needed some time to consider what I had said. In that respect I agreed that letting the matter rest was a good idea and thus I was content to wait for a future consideration of the subject. In light of that, I confidently expected some forthcoming explanation to my questions in a Watchtower article or else personal correspondence. I do not expect that letting a matter rest means letting it die nor do I think that was your intention. For that reason I have patiently waited. At this time I again ask for your consideration of my questions in those letters. My reasons for being concerned about this topic are many and varied.

As an elder I am expected to teach with conviction and to impart understanding. Such teaching is required from elders in several circumstances. Those circumstances can be in our public ministry, one on one with publishers, publicly from our Kingdom Hall platform, in judicial hearings, etc.... In each case elders have a responsibility to teach with conviction and to impart understanding. While all will not accept our convictions or understandings we should nonetheless have sound explanations for them. We should have, know and understand the *reasons* for our answers. In this case we should have scriptural reasons for answers from our existing scriptural stance. How can I teach with conviction and impart understanding without reasons for the answers.

Besides responsibilities as an elder I am also a husband and father. As a teacher my foremost responsibility is to my family. When questions are considered serious and worthy of an answer how can I so answer when I cannot explain it myself? In the case of my questions on medical use of blood, what do I say when I must admit that I do not have reasons for my answers? What will my wife and child think? How can I build within them conviction for something that I cannot explain?

Circumstances have already put me in the difficult position of avoiding situations where my questions asked are likely to arise. I do not want circumstances where someone could be hurt or stumbled because of my truthful admission that I see no explanation for certain of our stances on what is or is not tolerated. Since my last correspondence I have been asked twice to help with serious medical issues involving blood. In each case I had to defer publishers to another elder by asking that they be contacted for help instead of me. I explained that I was unable to assist them as needed at the time and that the other elder could. What I did not tell them was what made me unable to help. One of those circumstances was an emergency and it was crushing to feel unable to help directly. Circumstances such as that have caused me much distress. When my brothers needed me the most I feared being there out of concern for stumbling them with my inability to answer legitimate though likely questions for which I see no scriptural answers. The potential is there to cause stumbling, or discouragement at least, when they are already in a vulnerable position.

Then there is the matter of my family. Our daughter is now 16 months old. My wife and I have taken time to discuss what we should do in the case of a medical emergency involving blood. I must tell you that those conversations I find very stressful because I do not want to stumble my wife by admitting that I have serious concerns about not being able to explain with scriptures our stance of tolerance toward some blood components versus intolerance of other blood components. Then there is the discussion with our family physicians, which is likewise problematic.

Besides those circumstances there remains my initial problem causing me to write you in the first place, that of being able to address this topic in our public ministry. Particularly is this problematic when the recipient is a healthcare professional fully aware of aspects of blood, medical procedures involving it and solutions derived from or utilizing components of it.

My conscience dictates that I not lay a stumbling block before my brothers, family or anyone else if I can help it. Again that puts me in a stressful position of limiting who I can turn to for answers to all that I have asked in my former correspondence to you. Who can I turn to for scriptural answers regarding an existing scriptural stance if not to you brothers? Once back in 1980 (or it could have been 1981) I was told that brother Albert Schroeder was in the same hotel in which I was lodging for the convention in Jacksonville, Florida. At the time I had what was then to me a serious question for which I needed an answer. I was encouraged to just go knock on his door and ask. I did so and was warmly welcomed in and provided with an answer from the Bible. Well, I am again knocking at the door in need of an answer.

While patiently awaiting answers to my questions I have continued to pray and ponder over our stance of tolerance toward some blood components and intolerance toward other blood components as well as our overall teaching regarding medical infusion of blood. That prayerful pondering has led me to the idea that it is not proper to make or impose distinctions or applications if they are not so specified in the Bible. It is inconsistent that we tolerate some components of blood for medical purposes while being intolerant of the very donation making that possible. It is contradictory that we denounce it when blood is stored for later consumption and then turn around and use blood components requiring massive amounts of blood stored as denounced. Without scriptural distinctions it is inconsistent that we tolerate some components of blood when every component from blood is *equally* of blood. As far as I can see, making such scriptural distinctions is impossible. Considering that medical science will continue inventing various techniques for manipulating blood and dividing and using components of blood, it seems that we should apply the same *onus* toward all components of blood, either that of tolerating individual conscientious choice or that of intolerance of any blood components.

I hope the tenor of my letter is understood. I am not seeking to cause you brothers any distress. Indeed we all experience distress in these days and need for endurance. I support my entire association of brothers and am willing to give my life rather than needlessly stumble one of them. The Watchtower of June the 6th, 1982 on page 20 states, "At times, some bring to the attention of the 'slave' class various doctrinal or organizational matters that they feel ought to be revised. Certainly, suggestions for improvement are proper, as are inquiries for clarification." It is in harmony with that statement that my letter should be understood.

Your last correspondence to me on this topic advised it was appropriate at that time to let matters rest. Hopefully you will see observance of that advice in my patience. Likewise I hope that you will see my request as genuine and worthy of serious consideration for an answer at this time, whether that be in personal correspondence or some future Watchtower article. I have enclosed my earlier letters for that purpose and your convenience. If you need any clarifications regarding my questions or suggestions feel free to write or call and I will clarify all that I can.

Please be assured of my love for you and accept my appreciation for all your hard work in behalf of our neighbors, our brothers, my family and myself.

Your fellow servant,


R. Jensen

Enclosure: Copy of my letter dated 2/16/98
Copy of my letter dated 7/31/98