



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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Dear Brother Jensen:

We acknowledge your letter of January 18, 2000, in which you sent us a copy of your letter of November 15, 1999. In addition to considering these two most recent letters from you, we have reviewed your two letters of February 16, 1998, and July 31, 1998, and our replies to you dated March 23, 1998, and July 24, 1998. Your concern is why the accepting of some fractions of blood for medical treatment has been left as a matter of conscience.

Likely you will recall that at last week's study of *The Watchtower*, at the close of paragraph 18 on page 10 of the January 1, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*, the point was made that "if a Christian does not fully understand a new explanation of a scripture, he does well humbly to echo the words of the prophet Micah: 'I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation.'—Micah 7:7." We would like to encourage you similarly with respect to your questions on the matter of blood fractions. This is the wise and safe course.

You state that you have difficulty "in teaching our present stance regarding medical use of blood." You recognize as an elder you are expected to teach with conviction and to impart understanding. You express concern that you felt unable in the past to assist in cases of your brothers where there was an issue involving blood. Properly, you are concerned about making decisions on this matter that will have Jehovah's blessing as to yourself and your family, and as to what you teach publicly. You also again bring into the picture your discussions on this subject with health-care professionals with whom you have contact and their reactions. Desiring to act conscientiously in all these respects is certainly commendable.

However, care needs to be exercised, Brother Jensen, that you not seek to impose your deductions and conscience on others. For some decades now, "the faithful and discreet slave" has been giving the matter of blood usage in medical procedures careful and prayerful consideration in the light of the Scriptures. (Matthew 24:45-47) As blood began to be broken down into smaller and smaller component parts, arguments pro and con as to the use of these were considered. The consistent position of "the faithful and discreet slave" has been as expressed under "Questions From Readers" in the June 1, 1974, issue of *The Watchtower*: "While refraining from approving or condemning in such areas where we believe the decision must be left to individual conscience, we do, nevertheless, urge all to seek to maintain their conscience clear

before God, never showing deliberate disrespect for his Word." And you will see this same balance reflected also in answers to a series of questions under "Questions From Readers" in the June 15, 1978, and March 1, 1989, issues of *The Watchtower*.

Thus, acceptance or nonacceptance of small fractions of blood is left for each one to decide conscientiously after weighing all factors having a bearing. In your case, if you find no basis for accepting any component from blood, no matter how small or for what purpose, in treating a medical condition, then that would be your decision before Jehovah. In deciding matters this way, you could go ahead with your service to Jehovah with a clear conscience. Others, after also carefully and prayerfully considering all factors having a bearing, have concluded that they could accept certain minor components. Should they not be allowed to accept the responsibility before Jehovah for their decision, just as you are allowed to do the same regarding your decision?

Moreover, whatever one's decision is, this should not prevent him from helping others to understand what has been published by "the faithful and discreet slave" on the subject in the light of the Scriptures. Then those individuals can make their own informed decision. And this decision need not be, and should not be, because responsible brothers influenced them either way. As to this, we are aware that some elders, including some on Hospital Liaison Committees, have conscientiously decided that they personally do not wish to have certain minor blood components used in treating them, or none at all. But this position does not prevent them from being of help to their brothers and sisters, according to the need, when they need help understanding some aspect of what has been published on the use of minor blood fractions or some mechanical process that involves extracorporeal circulation of one's blood.

Regarding those in the health-care field who do not always understand our position, we are sure you will agree that this is not unexpected. Even as to our rejection of whole blood or major components of blood, many feel we are being unreasonable. However, as to those who ask sincere questions, we might say that those brothers who make presentations before doctors and receive questions from health-care professionals often find it suffices to say that while individuals may not see the logic of a particular position or agree with our reasoning, we ask that they respect our religious position on this matter, which includes letting each one decide whether or not to accept a minor fraction of blood. This almost invariably absorbs any implicit demand that we explain what appear to be inconsistencies or why some of Jehovah's Witnesses feel they can conscientiously accept certain small fractions while others do not.

We trust the additional comments above will be helpful. We take this occasion to send warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. V. Society

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