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March 3, 2000

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


Re: Blood and upholding righteous standards - **ADDENDUM**

Dear Brothers

Enclosed is an addendum to my letter dated March 1, 2000. Please forward this cover letter and its enclosure to whomever has my March 1, 2000 letter.

Thanks for giving this matter your prompt attention. I take this occasion to again send my love and greetings to you all.

Your fellow servant of Jehovah,

  
R. Jensen

**Enclosure:** Suggested View Of The Apostolic Decree "Abstain from blood" **ADDENDUM** (3 pages)

**Suggested View of The  
Apostolic Decree "Abstain From Blood"**

**ADDENDUM**

Realizing I neglected to address the apostolic decree as recorded and whether it agrees with my suggested view I have supplied this addendum to correct the oversight.

In respect to blood my suggestion dated March 1, 2000 concluded the following about the apostolic decree as defined by the law to Noah:

1. It requires abstention from eating blood of animals slain for purposes of food.
2. It requires abstaining from wanton taking of human life.
3. It requires that we work whole-souled at following the mandate to preach and teach the good news of God's Kingdom.
4. It does not require abstaining from medical transfusions of blood as practiced today because such does not require any taking of life.

Are these conclusions compatible with the apostolic decree as recorded? Does the apostolic decree support those conclusions? Those are the two questions this addendum will address.

In regards to blood the apostolic decree rests firmly on the law God gave to Noah. Acts 15:19-21 states:

"Hence my decision is not to trouble those from the nations who are turning to God, but to write them to abstain from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For from ancient times Moses has had in city after city those who preach him, because he is read aloud in the synagogues on every sabbath."

Since the Bible elsewhere makes plain that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law and since reasoning found at Acts chapter 15 considers the experience of gentiles already accepted by God as His true worshippers—who did not conform to the Mosaic Law nor bound to it—then the reference to the reading of Moses as associated with the apostolic decree can only refer to writings of Moses other than The Law to Israel. The only reading of Moses outside The Law to Israel yet containing explicit comments regarding prohibitions on blood is the text of Genesis chapter 9, making that law to Noah the only basis for prohibitions on blood found in the apostolic decree.

For the first century governing body the question boiled down to what was necessary to impose upon those becoming Christians, including themselves of course. The account at Acts chapter 15 demonstrates that the law to Noah was considered for such necessities and rightly so because it was a law applicable to all mankind not just Israel. (Besides the law to Noah, other of Moses' writings were used to establish parts of the apostolic decree aside from that having to do with blood or the Law to Israel) As far as decreed requirements go the law to Noah contained three for mankind.

1. God's command that mankind "Be fruitful and become many." (Genesis 9:1; Compare It-1 page 258, par 1)
2. His command prohibiting mankind from eating blood of animals slain for food.
3. His command prohibiting the taking of human life except as recompense to wanton taking of life.

**Addendum to: March 1, 2000 Suggested View of The Apostolic Decree "Abstain From Blood"**

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Of those three commands the apostolic decree *does not reaffirm* the command for Christians to "Be fruitful and become many" in regard to marriage and childbearing. Since the law to Noah was for all mankind why would that command to Noah not be considered a necessity for Christians? For the most part the *need* for population growth was not by then an issue. That command was given on two separate occasions, both of which saw mankind with extremely limited populations, which necessitated childbearing. (Compare Genesis 1:28) However, and more importantly, Jesus had indicated that that decree was no longer necessary and therefore no longer required. He said, "For there are eunuchs that were born such from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens. *Let him that can make room for it make room for it.*" (Matthew 19:12; Italics added) Being fully aware of Jesus' statement, "*Let him that can make room for it make room for it*" and being influenced by holy spirit the first century governing body could easily see negated the command regarding childbearing. After that time childbearing or not was up to individuals rather than a command to follow; it was not deemed a *necessity*. (See also 1 Corinthians 7:8)

We will now jump to the third command to Noah prohibiting the taking of human life (shedding man's blood) except as recompense to wanton taking of life. Abstaining from wanton taking of life is certainly necessary for Christians. Since the apostolic decree to "abstain from things strangled" covers the prohibition against eating blood of animals slain for food then the decree to "abstain from blood" stands as reaffirmation that wanton taking of life remains as a decreed prohibition and a *necessary* requirement for Christians. Is that really what the first century governing body had in mind with the expression "abstain from blood"? Consider the following:

1. As recorded at Act chapter 15 issues before the governing body were in part decided based upon God's acceptance of gentiles as Christians, as "people for his name". (Acts 15:14) The very first gentile Christian was Cornelius, an *army officer* of the Italian band. (Acts 10:1, 44-48) Army officers are charged with killing enemies of the State and teaching subordinates to do likewise. Could those like Cornelius remain as such and please God? Hardly. Which is one reason making the decree "abstain from blood" a *necessity* as applied to wanton taking of human life.
2. It was commonplace for persons living in that era to carry personal weapons designed to kill humans; people were prepared to kill people, including some of Jesus' disciples. (Luke 22:38; See It-1 page 169, par 4) Being armed with such weaponry created a distinct danger that Christians might "shed man's blood" in violation of God's law to *all mankind* through Noah. Many back then willingly persecuted fellow humans to death over mere ideological differences and with impunity. Saul did it and he was also subject to such murderous brutality. (Acts 8:1; 14:19) Persons learning of Jesus and God's Kingdom had to learn that such behavior and disposition is completely inappropriate for followers of Christ. (Ephesians 4:20-24) Again, a clear and present *need* existed that "abstain from blood" carry the prohibition against unlawful killing of humans. It was a *necessity*.
3. Contrary to the decree to be fruitful with childbearing—which Jesus' words effectively abolished—Jesus had earlier reaffirmed the law to Noah regarding wanton taking of human life. He said to Peter and those present, "For all those who take the sword will perish by the sword."

In the case of the first century governing body it is easy to see why their decree to "abstain from blood" was actually reaffirmation of the law to mankind through Noah prohibiting the wanton taking of human life.

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Finally we go back to the second prohibition decreed to Noah for mankind, that of prohibiting mankind from eating blood of animals slain for food. Each record of the apostolic decree requires abstention from blood "and" from things strangled. (Acts 15:20, 29, 21:25) Considering that the law to Noah was the basis for those decrees and that the law to Noah prohibited *two actions regarding blood* then we must conclude that the decree to abstain from "blood" is one of those prohibitions to Noah and the decree to abstain from "things strangled" is the other of the two prohibitions to Noah. Otherwise the decree redundantly repeats the same prohibition twice when both are necessary for Christians.

What does the foregoing suggest regarding the apostolic decree? Beyond just being compatible with suggestions/conclusions offered in this letter the apostolic decree actually agrees with and supports those conclusions. The conjunction "and" between blood prohibitions evidences that both such laws to Noah were being reaffirmed, but no more than that. The circumstances of the meeting, the reasoning toward the decree and the needs of those brothers coincided at the point that two of those three laws to Noah needed reaffirmation and one not. Two of them were necessities and one was not. Of those two laws reaffirmed neither is sufficient basis to absolutely conclude that medical blood transfusion as practiced today is prohibited to Christians.

My suggestion also draws the conclusion that "abstain from blood" requires that we work whole-souled at following the mandate to preach and teach the good news of God's Kingdom. Why such a conclusion? First of all, we must remember that Noah was also a preacher of righteousness. His preaching had the direct affect of saving those who listened to him; his fellow humans. Secondly, it was Paul who said, "And now, look! I know that all of YOU among whom I went preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. Hence I call YOU to witness this very day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not held back from telling YOU all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:25-28, italics added) Had Paul not been active in preaching and teaching the good news of God's Kingdom, by his own admission he would have been guilty before God of shedding human blood, which is precisely one of the prohibitions laid down to mankind through Noah. Noah's example and Paul's deduction combine to evidence that "abstain from blood" requires that we work whole-souled at following the mandate to preach and teach the good news of God's Kingdom.

As I said before, it is harmony with direction from "the faithful slave" that I leave this suggested improved view of the apostolic decree to "abstain from blood" in the hands of you brothers. For me, the matter is now in Jehovah's hands. (See The Watchtower of June 1, 1982 page 20, par. 15)

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