

The “Jensen Letters”: Analysis and Commentary

Doug Mason

Full text of the “Jensen letters” is available at
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email: doug_mason1940@yahoo.com.au
web site: au.geocities.com/doug_mason1940/

THE “JENSEN LETTERS”: ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Since the introduction of the ban on the medical use of blood, Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs) continued writing to their controlling body, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS), expressing their deep concerns with the organization’s teachings on the medical use of blood.

In February 1998, JW Elder R. Jensen of Alabama wrote to the WTS of New York. The full text of their correspondence is available at <http://www.jwtruth.com/articles/BloodJensenLettersText.aspx> A synopsis and analysis of their correspondence commences on the next page.

The “Jensen letters” show the grave difficulties an Elder had with the WTS over its stance on blood. In their letters, the WTS evades direct questions, fails to provide all of the relevant facts, does not give Scriptural reasons for its decisions, tells the Elder to “wait on the organization”, and so on. These are clear examples of its Theocratic War Strategy in action being applied internally, in the direct context of blood.

Throughout the years covered by the correspondence, Elder Jensen maintained his lifelong ongoing deep and sincere devotion to the organization. But he was so concerned with the teachings concerning the medical use of blood that he felt he had no option but to communicate directly with the controlling body.

The letters show that JW’s as high as Elders have grave reservations with the teachings and they provide some reasons for those concerns.

While the JW asked for scriptural reasons for the WTS’s stance, none was forthcoming. The JW was told to heed whatever the “faithful and discreet slave” class (Governing Body) said, and wait.

The letters also show that the WTS permits the use of some fractions of blood, while it denies the use of other fractions. The final decision depends on the JW’s convictions, without the WTS being able to provide any explanations based on Scripture showing which fractions were acceptable and which were not.

The WTS’s error is that it assumes a blood transfusion is a form of eating. A transfusion is, as the word indicates, a fusion of transferred tissue. Also in error, the WTS creates a “Law of Noah”, which it says is universal, in contrast to the Law of Moses, which is Jewish in application.

EXCERPTS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN JW ELDER JENSEN AND THE WTS

In Elder Jensen's February 1998 letter to the WTS, he explains to the WTS the circumstances that caused him to write to them:

Dear Brothers

The contents [of this letter are the outcome of] my own activity in the ministry with persons in the health care industry. ... These individuals have heard expressions of my faith on opportune occasions, and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses have been the subject of friendly and meaningful conversation. ...

In the last few months questions have been presented for which I have no answer. ...

Elder Jensen describes himself

I am an elder in the C----- congregation in C----- Alabama ... I have understood and appreciated the [JW] directive to abstain from blood for most of my life, and as an elder have several times assisted friends under stressful and even life threatening circumstances. Reading and studying further into this subject has only strengthened my resolve to abstain from blood, consequentially.

The concerns that Elder Jensen's health care contacts have

Physicians are ... interested in knowing how to deal with patients who happen to be Jehovah's Witnesses. ... Of interest to the physicians is how our organization deals with persons who decide to accept blood components. ...

They begin having the questions (about which I write) when we discuss how Jehovah's Witnesses deal with [JWs] differently due to particular blood components accepted. ... They question why *we do not* deal judicially with [JWs] accepting injections of blood components as long as they are from the fractions of protein, hormone, salts or enzyme components of blood, when *we do* deal judicially with [JWs] accepting any components of red cells, white cells, platelets or plasma ...

The most direct difference these physicians see between the two is in the relatively small measure of some blood components compared to other blood components and the amounts usually administered (they see all as being of blood), and that it appears our organizational tolerance (referring to actions left to conscience and not dealt with judicially) is somehow determined by individual conscience. They thus wonder why the entire matter is not left to personal conscience by our organization. ...

Questions asked by the physicians

They ask the following:

Regarding judicial / non-judicial status:

- Is it the amount of blood or the particular components of blood one accepts that measures when we deal judicially with someone?
- If it's the amount, what is the amount?

- If it’s not the amount is it simply left up to the conscience of the individual as to which component they are willing to accept and which they decline, or are there arbitrary reasons for the selection of some blood components for medical use requiring judicial action and others requiring no judicial action?

Regarding our understanding of the prohibition in Acts 15:29:

- What is Jehovah’s Witnesses’ *definition* of blood?
- Are all parts of blood “blood” or are there certain components of blood we do not define as “blood” as prohibited in Acts 15:29? (For example: Scripturally what makes red cells coming from whole blood *different* from proteins coming from whole blood, making one a matter of interest judicially and the other of no judicial interest?)
- If certain components in blood are not “blood” as prohibited at Acts 15:29, *how is this determined*?
- Are components of blood no longer viewed as “blood” once they are of small enough proportion, if so what is the amount?
- Is it the *particular component* binding the relation to Acts 15:29’s prohibition? If so what are the **scriptural** reasons for allowing these components as a matter of conscience by our organization while upholding God’s requirements judicially in response to acceptance of other components? ...

“The source of nourishment for the unborn”

Also, regarding Acts 15:29, there was discussion about the passage of antibodies and proteins via the placenta. This did not seem to satisfy their questions from a *scriptural* position and there was reluctance to accept that only antibodies and/or proteins passed through the placenta. One asked: “How do you think water is delivered to an unborn child if not *from* the mothers blood, specifically from the plasma?” He added: “Even though their blood systems do not actually intermingle, the source of nourishment for the unborn is from the mothers blood.” ...

Regarding general misuse of blood, I was asked if I had any idea how much blood had to be “misused” (by Jehovah’s Witnesses’ standards) to produce the blood components which our organization leaves to conscience, I had no idea (and still don’t). ...

Elder Jensen desires a better Scriptural understanding

I too desire a better understanding of *how* we can determine Scripturally that elders should deal judicially with publishers because of a particular component of blood accepted, while not dealing with publishers accepting other components.

Especially confusing is a statement made in the June 1st 1990 Watchtower on page 31, it says: “Others have felt that a serum (antitoxin), such as immune globulin, containing only a tiny fraction of a donor’s blood plasma and used to bolster their defense against disease, is *not the same as a life-sustaining blood transfusion. So their consciences may not forbid them* to take immune globulin or similar fractions. They may conclude that for them the decision will rest primarily on whether they are willing to accept any health risks involved in an injection made from others’ blood.” (italics added) There are two things puzzling about this quote.

First:

Doctors will admit that transfusion of plasma or red cells may save someone’s life, but so does factor VIII. *Both save lives*, both are life sustaining. Without factor VIII hemophiliacs would be certain candidates for extremely short life. Since both save lives how can one be singled out for judicial action and the other ignored? Also there is the use of albumin for burn victims, this administered blood component certainly *saves lives*.

Second:

The italicized portion also indicates that *individual consciences play a determining role* in our decision about what we tolerate morally. What if someone’s conscience allowed acceptance of components like plasma, concluding that their decision rests primarily with accepting health risks?

With this information how can elders show individuals Scripturally why we tolerate acceptance of some blood components while dealing judicially with acceptance of other components? I have read countless articles on these issues and find no answer, nor could the elders I asked.

Additionally ... the w89 3/1 30 comments that Jehovah’s Witnesses “DO NOT accept” certain autologous procedures. The reason for this is well stated: ‘We have long appreciated that such **stored blood** certainly is no longer part of the person. It has been completely removed from him, so it *should be disposed of in line with God’s Law*: “You should pour it out upon the ground as water.”—Deuteronomy 12:24.’ ... With this bottom line scriptural law in mind it seems of importance **that all blood fractions for medical use come from whole blood which has been intentionally: donated (or even sold), stored**, processed, sold for commercial profit, and finally introduced into another person. How can it be *Scripturally reasoned* that all of this misuse of blood, explicitly to sell, buy or use blood fractions, can possibly be accepted by any [JW’s] conscience? ...

My question arises because in the case of blood fractions administered medically there *must* first have occur several procedures which we “DO NOT accept”, leading *intentionally* and *directly* to the product offered. Would not acceptance (and purchase) of the intentional end product be directly supportive of the process when there is *no obligation* on our part to accept such? Is the described process acceptable? (reference: w81 10/15 30, w90 6/1 30) ...

Elder Jensen needs assistance to provide him understanding

I look forward to reading your reply. ... I look forward to your response. ... I seek only understanding. ...

I just can’t nail down the *scriptural answers* to the questions above and need your assistance. I thank you in advance for your kind spiritual aid in this matter. ... *Keep up the good work!*

Your brother in Jehovah’s service,

A few weeks later, in March 1998 the WTS (Desk ECC:ECO) responded to Elder Jensen’s letter.

They initially provided their own summary of his letter.

Dear Brother Jensen:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 16, 1998. You ask about the propriety of a [JW] accepting blood fractions for medical purposes. You say you have been discussing this matter with various medical doctors and have found it difficult to answer some of their questions. We note you have considered what the Society has published on this subject ...

The WTS allows an individual to decide whether to accept certain proteins from blood

As indicated, the Society has left it to the individual [JW] to decide whether he or she can accept blood fractions such as proteins found in the bloodstream, believing this to be in a gray area ...

If a [JW’s] conscience will not allow him to accept a serum, we would encourage him to respect the dictates of his conscience. However, as you know, when we say “fractions,” it is not meant that a few drops or even a drop of whole blood is involved. Rather, whole blood is broken down into its various parts and certain proteins or other minute substances are taken from the breakdown product, called immunoglobulins ...

(WTS) “The blood derivative is only a small fraction of blood”

It might be argued that if blood was properly disposed of, it would not be possible to make serum injections ... But if blood is taken from a body and, before it is disposed of, is broken down by a medical procedure and in the process a small fraction is extracted, not to eat or to nourish the body, but to immunize against a disease, could it be said that there is a clear violation of God’s law not to eat blood? Jehovah is reasonable concerning his laws and their application. ...

So, too, the blood derivative is only a small fraction of blood, as mentioned above. Such can be distinguished from the major components of the blood, such as the red cells. ...

(WTS) “Accepting a small injection ... of a breakdown product”

Taking a transfusion of blood is clearly contrary to God’s law. But what about accepting a small injection, not of whole blood or even a primary component of blood, but of a breakdown product, whether it be salt taken from blood, sugar taken from blood, iron, calcium, a hormone, or another fractionalized part?

(WTS) “Why ... disfellowshipped for taking a blood transfusion but not for taking blood fractions”

You also ask why one can be disfellowshipped for taking a blood transfusion but not for taking blood fractions. While both may affect the life of an individual, the expression “life-sustaining” in connection with blood transfusions is synonymous with the idea of taking in food for nourishment. In this regard both whole blood and major components of it carry nutrients, oxygen, and other nourishment to the body. It is this aspect of taking in blood, that is, to provide nourishment, that links blood transfusions with the Biblical prohibition.

(WTS) "Blood fractions in certain situations can be lifesaving [but] they do not operate to feed and nourish"

The motive or reason for taking a serum is ... not to feed the body, as would be the case if there was an eating of whole blood (or a major component thereof) by mouth or by having it transfused intravenously. Rather, the antibodies that have been separated out are administered for the purpose of immunizing the body against a certain disease. While blood fractions in certain situations can be lifesaving, they do not operate to feed and nourish the body and in this way sustain life but, rather, utilize other mechanisms.

We trust the above comments will be helpful to you in reasoning on this matter from the Scriptures. We take this occasion to send our warm love and Christian greetings.

At the end of July 1998, 4 months after the WTS replied, Elder Jensen wrote again.**"In your response I found no answer to my questions relative to this issue"**

In your letter the following statement is made:

"It might be argued that if blood was properly disposed of, it would not be possible to make serum injections"

This argument is precisely at the heart of one of my questions. ...

[JWs] know that use of any blood derivative is dependent on blood not being poured out as commanded by God. In your **response I found no answer to my questions relative to this issue.**

"I feel an answer should be possible"

Again, can it possibly be scripturally reasoned away that our *intentional* buying of products having blood components as a critical element does not support the wholesale abuse of blood?

Should we view processing of blood for commercial gain as acceptable, that is, since we support it by *voluntarily* purchasing some of its end products?

I feel an answer should be possible and that it would likely have a direct bearing on [JW] conduct.

"It seems the crux of the above quoted reasoning is that blood derivatives are 'not eaten to nourish the body.'"

Further, you state:

"But if blood is taken from a body and, before it is disposed of, is broken down by a medical procedure and in the process a small fraction is extracted, not to eat or to nourish the body, but to immunize against a disease, could it be said that there is a clear violation of God's law not to eat blood?"

From infancy I've been taught that transfusion of material intravenously is similar to eating, at least as far as abstention goes. ... I must conclude that ingestion of a blood fraction, intravenously or otherwise would be eating. What if the same medical blood derivative could be given orally? It's still being given for immunization, would this then be eating?

It seems the crux of the above quoted reasoning is that blood derivatives are ‘not eaten to nourish the body.’ Does the administering of blood components like white cells nourish the body like a meal? Would they even be administered as a meal, or would they only be administered for medical purposes?

“I don’t see the instances ... as a matter of amount, but rather a matter of activity”

Someone starving could be saved if provided with food for ingestion, whether this be provided intravenously or by mouth. Would someone starving survive by having a blood component like white cells transfused into their veins? It seems white cells are used only for medical purposes, not to provide nutrition like a meal, but to increase the bodies ability to fight certain conditions.

Isn’t this similar to why other *acceptable* components are used? I understand from your letter that major components of blood carry *some* type of nourishment, but is it the same as eating a meal?

Would white cells provide *nourishing sustenance* if given intravenously similar to its going through the human digestive track?

I am quite sure that the 5% of blood which we tolerate acceptance of could be eaten for nourishment just as red cells or white cells could. Why does it become acceptable if this same material is ingested intravenously? Isn’t this similar to eating? After all, some of these components are prescribed and administered in substantial amounts, especially when they are infused regularly. ...

[You seem] to reason that size or amount somehow enters into the picture with the command to abstain from blood. I don’t see the instance above as a matter of amount, but rather a matter of activity.

“God gave *explicit prohibitions*, and *amount* had nothing whatsoever to do with the prohibition”

But things God *explicitly prohibited* were not tolerated, *not even when infringed upon in some minor way*. Could Eve had eaten just minor components from the forbidden tree and been acceptable to God? Would Achan have lived had he only intentionally taken minor components of spoil? In these cases God gave *explicit prohibitions*, and *amount* had nothing whatsoever to do with the prohibition.

God has said “abstain from blood.” Is there something in this command separating blood components? This prohibition is quite explicit, just as His commands to take no spoils from Jericho and not to eat from that one tree in the garden of Eden.

If we view acceptance of blood for medical purposes as breaking God’s command to abstain from blood, how can we justify acceptance of 5% of its components based on amount or nutritional value? ...

Another similar example is of “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.” This tree represented something *belonging to God*, it was his property, *it was sacred*, and humans were forbidden to “eat” from it. If it had been possible to take something from this tree and ‘break it down by a medical procedure thereby obtaining some fraction component able to fight disease’, would it have been acceptable for ingestion? Could we possibly conclude that this would not be eating from the tree?

Are we to understand that some components of blood belong to Jehovah and some do not, allowing [JW] tolerance of intentional ingestion of some blood fractions? When it comes to blood—God’s sacred symbol of life—are we to understand that [JWs] can distinguish and separate off the parts they want before giving the rest back to God?

“How do we explain this seeming contradiction in deduction?”

One summation in your letter is that the aspect of taking in blood which is scripturally objectionable is its *providing of nourishment*. You are specific that whole blood and major components carry nourishment to the body. Does this mean that the tolerated 5% of components carry no nourishment? If persons ate these components outright would they gain no nourishment from them?

Aren’t the immunization effects themselves nourishment just as the immunizing components of a mother’s milk are to her infant child?

Is it the major components themselves or the nutrition they carry which makes them objectionable?

We have used the transference of antibodies and proteins via the placenta as reason that some might conscientiously accept these components of blood. However, when it come to *nourishment* carried by the blood, doesn’t a fetus receive every bit of its nutrition—including water from the plasma—from the blood of the mother? How do we explain this seeming contradiction in deduction?

Elder Jensen’s “reluctance to continue blood specific conversations”

By now I’m sure you can see my reluctance to continue blood specific conversations with individuals in the healthcare field. I have found it difficult—if not impossible—to express scriptural reasons for our tolerance of *some* blood components and intolerance of other blood components. One physician has recently raised the subject but I quickly changed the topic for want of scriptural answer.

“Current teaching seems impossible to explain *scripturally*”

In view of the Bible’s explicit directive to abstain from blood, and our governing its use among ourselves, it would seem that either we should tolerate no *intentional* acceptance of blood regardless of the component, or that we view acceptance of blood for purely medical reasons differently from eating blood as a meal. Our current teaching seems impossible to explain *scripturally*, leaving *arbitrary reasoning* as our answer.

“I don’t understand your response”

Until now I have chosen not to share the information above with those to whom it was intended because I don’t understand your response as it is. I would ask your re-examination of my initial letter together with this reply. I express my deepest appreciation for your earnest efforts. Thanks in advance.

Keep up the good work!

Your brother in Jehovah’s service,

[Signed: R. Jensen]

Three weeks later, in August 1998, the WTS (Desk ECC:ECM) replied.

The following is the sum total of their response (bold emphasis supplied):

Dear Brother Jensen:

Your letter of July 31, 1998, has been received, and **we note your response** to our recent correspondence to you in connection with the Biblical view of blood fractions.

This is a matter that **you have obviously given much thought** to and we appreciate your concern in this regard. However, it seems that it would be appropriate at this time to **let the matter rest**. Of course, you are free to **make your own personal decision** in such matters, while at the same time **allowing others to exercise their own freedom** in making a personal choice.

It is a pleasure to be associated with you and our brothers worldwide in the grand work Jehovah is having done in the earth today. Please accept an expression of our Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

[Signed: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc.]

This is a rude, arrogant and uncaring response from the WTS. They did not address any of Elder Jensen's carefully considered concerns, which he clearly finds deeply worrying.

Instead of answering Elder Jensen and providing the scriptural basis for their instructions to the worldwide body of JWs, the WTS employs its 'Theocratic War Strategy' to one of its own, telling Elder Jensen nothing more than to "let the matter rest" and "make your own decision". No answers were provided, no information given. A policy of evasion was employed.

Elder Jensen waited 15 months until he could no longer contain his concerns. This was affecting his work as an Elder and damaging his conscience.

So in a letter dated November 15, 1999, Elder Jensen wrote again, first addressing the WTS's instruction to "let the matter rest".

Dear Brothers ...

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. ...

"How can I teach with conviction?"

As an elder I am expected to teach with conviction and to impart understanding. ... 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. ... 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. ... The potential is there to cause stumbling, or discouragement at least, when they are already in a vulnerable position. ... Then there is the discussion with our family physicians, which is likewise problematic. ...

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? ...

"It is inconsistent that we tolerate some components of blood"

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 the aforementioned and 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 accepting any blood components.

"Please be assured of my love for you"

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. ...

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,

[Signed: R. Jensen]

On February 21, 2000, the WTS (Desk ECA:ECN) responded. In part, the WTS wrote:

(WTS) “[Do] not seek to impose your deductions and conscience on others”

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” (The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses) has been giving the matter of blood usage in medical procedures careful and prayerful consideration ...

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. ...

The WTS then tells Elder Jensen that no matter what his decision is, he must still teach what the Governing Body is teaching

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” (Governing Body) on the subject. ...

(WTS) Non-JWs should respect the WTS’s religious teachings

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. ...

(WTS) “This almost invariably absorbs any implicit demand that we explain what appear to be inconsistencies”

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. ...

Your brothers,

[Signed: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc.]

Two weeks later, on 1 March 2000 Elder Jensen responded with another letter, carefully detailing his concerns.

“You brothers [in the WTS] do not understand ... my concern”

I fear that you brothers do not understand the full measure—indeed specific requests—of my concern. ...

“I am not seeking to impose anything ... since I cannot explain scripturally the distinctions of our stance”

I am not seeking to impose anything on anyone, indeed I try hard to avoid such, nor am I inclined to do so. At this point I am not sure I could impose anything regarding medical use of blood components because I am unable to do so, which is part of my problem. For example, if a local friend chose to accept white corpuscles to bolster their immune system then as an elder I would be expected to impose our stance, which prohibits acceptance of white corpuscles. Since I cannot explain scripturally the distinctions of our stance I could not impose that stance. ...

“My concerns have existed for some time now, they are not new or short lived”

I am not seeking scriptural clarifications regarding a “*new*” teaching, but rather one that has existed for decades. ... Is it unreasonable to request clarification of reasons/views offered regarding teachings decades old?

Is it unreasonable that someone asked to teach asks for an understanding of the “reasons behind [the] answers” or “the Scriptural reasons for [the] explanations”? (See Organized To Accomplish Our Ministry page 44; Our Kingdom Ministry, February 2000 page 8)

My concerns have existed for some time now, they are not new or short lived.

“I have asked for corresponding scriptural explanations”

I have asked you for scriptural clarifications. I have also waited, allowing time for your thorough consideration of my request. Regarding “*new*” views, we usually *do give* corresponding scriptural reasons for them. Whether we understand or not has more to do with our understanding of those *scriptural reasons* not just a “*new*” idea itself. ... What I have asked is for corresponding scriptural explanations regarding certain pertinent details of our stance. ...

“Contradictions/inconsistencies that appear indefensible”

Our stance on blood exhibits certain other contradictions/inconsistencies that appear indefensible. For example:

1. The contradiction of our utilizing donated and stored blood while simultaneously condemning the donation and storage of blood for medical use.
2. Saying that we abstain from blood when in fact our stance tolerates acceptance of some components of blood. Physicians or anyone else can simply say, “Jehovah’s Witnesses abstain from some parts of blood and but not all parts of blood.”

“My specific concerns are not addressed in your February 21, 2000 response”

In your February 21, 2000 reply you stated, “Your concern is why the accepting of some fractions of blood for medical treatment has been left as a matter of conscience.” Actually, regarding fractions, more accurately my concern is “Why is accepting certain fractions considered ‘a matter of conscience’ while acceptance of *other* fractions is not considered ‘a matter of conscience’”? I see no such distinction that can be made scripturally and **my specific concerns—detailed above—are not addressed in your February 21, 2000 response. ...**

I fear now that my concerns and questions raised about our present stance have no scriptural answers. If they existed I feel you brothers would have already shared them with me. This is very disheartening. ...

Acts 15, Acts 21 do not require taking of a life

The apostolic decree (Acts 15, Acts 21) does not require abstaining from medical transfusions of blood as practiced today because such does not require any taking of life. ...

“God’s *permission to eat flesh* likewise poses significant health risks”

We have imputed wisdom to refraining from medical transfusion of blood based upon dangers inherent to the practice. However, considering that God’s *permission to eat flesh* likewise poses significant health risks, such reasoning becomes problematic. *Like blood*, if flesh is exposed to virulent organisms or is not prepared or selected correctly it can—and has—caused significant loss of health and even death. Today even in developed lands thousands die annually from food poisoning. Since food poisoning victimizes health and causes death just as can medical use of blood then we cannot impute any unique wisdom associated with abstention of one versus the other based upon risk to health.

The WTS did not reply to this letter or to a subsequent letter of clarification.

This inaction displays elements of the WTS’s ‘Theocratic War Strategy’, such as being evasive, failing to provide all of the facts, withholding information, and so on.

About a year later, on January 3, 2001, Elder Jensen wrote again.

“The June 15, 2000 *Questions From Readers* ... increased the difficulties”

Initially I thought the June 15, 2000 *Questions From Readers* article (in *The Watchtower* magazine) contained a response to the inherent and internal difficulties of our stance on the subject. But after reading it I found no resolution or answer to those problems as outlined in my letter of March 1, 2000. To the contrary, I found that that article actually increased the difficulties. ...

“Jehovah’s Witnesses accept some parts of blood but reject other parts of blood”

The opening remark in that article states, “The fundamental answer is that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not accept blood.” But, based upon what the article goes on to say, a more precise fundamental answer is that Jehovah’s Witnesses accept some parts of blood but reject other parts of blood.

Calling a substance an ‘extract from blood components’ does not change the fact that some of those extracts are as unique to blood as other forbidden parts of blood. (What makes a tolerated *whole* protein component [like human albumin or factor VIII] inferior to a forbidden *whole* platelet component?)

Calling something an ‘extract of blood components’ does not recognize that some of the tolerated ‘extracts’ amount to a larger volume than other forbidden parts of blood.

“An arbitrary division of components ... the Bible makes no such distinction”

The June 15th article speaks of “extracts from blood components” only in respect to an arbitrary division of components namely white cells, red cells, platelets, and plasma. Those divisions are arbitrary because the Bible makes no such distinction of blood components as if an extract from one of them is less than a part of blood, a lesser part of blood or of lesser Biblical significance. Finally, calling something an ‘extract from blood’ in the context of that article avoids the fact that every single part of blood is intermingled with plasma. That means that forbidden components like platelets must be extracted from blood plasma as must other tolerated parts of blood if they are going to be administered or used separately. For that reason it is meaningless to call something an “extract of plasma” as if that action is a unique secondary extraction for certain components but not for others. ...

Our stance of accepting some parts of blood and rejecting other parts of blood is inherently flawed and so far as I can tell has no support in scripture.

No scriptural stance provided

I have also repeatedly asked for guidance to where such a stance can be reasoned from the scriptures yet none has been provided.

The idea conveyed in the June 15th (2000) article (of *The Watchtower*) that our stance is simple confounds the senses of persons who want to understand our stance from a scriptural perspective, including me. ...

“We abstain from some parts of blood but ... [not] from other parts.”

We teach that we abstain from blood yet more precisely stated our stance is that we abstain from some parts of blood but we do not abstain from other parts of blood. I cannot in good conscience tell a physician or anyone else that we abstain from all medical use of donated and stored blood and that is what is implied when we tell persons that we abstain from blood. ...

“A contradiction on a fundamental point of reason”

Particularly confusing/disturbing is a comparison between how the June 15th and October 15th articles treat the idea of pouring blood out on the ground. ... A comparison of the June 15th and October 15th articles indicates that one treats ‘pour blood out’ as *less than* an absolute standard and the other treats ‘pour blood out’ as an absolute standard. The two articles represent a contradiction on a fundamental point of reason. ...

Neither the June 15th nor the October 15th articles dealt at all with difficulties raised in my letters to you on the subject of blood and upholding righteous standards. ...and **at this time I request an answer from you on those concerns**. You may also want to review past letters between us on this same subject.

“Our stance is overall in error”

My letter of March 1, 2000 indicated my feelings that our stance is overall in error and that a significant change is in order. ...

As indicated in my letters of March 2000, please be assured that my faithfulness is intact and that I will remain patient on this subject. But while patiently waiting I would appreciate your replying to my questions, concerns and reasoning. Please accept my thanks for giving this request your attention.

Elder Jensen wrote three months later in a letter dated April 6, 2001.

It has been three months since I last wrote you on the subject of blood where I again addressed serious concerns and suggested a course that is scripturally reasoned.

On February 23, 2001 I called Brooklyn Bethel and asked to speak with someone in the Writing Department about my letter. I was transferred to the Writing Correspondence Department at Patterson. The brother taking the call said my letter had been received and that someone was “working on it.”

Effects of the WTS’s ‘Theocratic War Strategy’ on Elder Jensen

To date I have not heard back from you. That hurts, and it leaves me bewildered.

My sincere concerns are very serious ones, and your replies have not resolved them with the Bible.

... **it hurts that I now feel practically ignored.** It seems completely fitting and reasonable that I ask for your answers to questions—and a suggestion—that I have patiently waited over a year for. After allowing that length of time for your consideration, if I cannot talk back and forth with you brothers about these concerns then who should I go to?

The hurt and bewilderment is exacerbated because I have offered to answer any questions you may have; yet none have been asked of me.

I have even offered to visit you brothers in person if that would help. That you have made no inquires to me leads to the belief that my concerns and suggestion are understood by you, or at least that you do not believe you misunderstand them, or me.

The result is that my confidence is eroding. My faith and confidence in Jehovah and his holy word, the Bible feels strong.

What is suffering is my confidence that brothers who I look to for help will give a scripturally reasoned answer to the details of my concerns and suggestion; and I do not understand that because it goes contrary to my experience. This is very hurting and disconcerting.

This letter is not sent to aggravate or discourage anyone. If I thought my questions could be resolved another way I would do that instead of asking for your time and attention. ...

Only you men know why I have not already received scriptural answers from you on specifics.

As a spiritual man I work hard at helping all those asking for it, and do not understand why I am being made to feel as I do. ...

I continue to welcome any questions or concerns you may have on this matter.

A resolution is needed

I need some resolution on this subject, and it is hard to believe that need is unique to me. Surely all our brothers would benefit from seeing addressed the same serious and specific concerns I have raised.

In a reply dated May 30, 2001, the WTS wrote (in part here):

This letter follows a telephone conversation with you on May 17, 2001. ...

When you first wrote and shared your observations with us, you did not ask for a reply. Nevertheless, what you wrote was not ignored. All of your letters have been carefully considered. ...

(WTS) Decisions are made by the Governing Body

Each time this matter has come up for review by the “slave” class (Governing Body), taking all pertinent factors into consideration, including those discussed in your letters, the basic conclusion has been the same, that accepting a transfusion of whole blood, or of its four recognized primary components—red cells, white cells, platelets, or whole plasma—would clearly be contrary to the Scriptures.

(WTS) “As to accepting minor fractions of blood ...”

As to accepting minor fractions of blood, “Questions From Readers” in the June 1, 1974, issue of *The Watchtower*, states: “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.” ...

(WTS) “Decide matters in accord with the dictates of their consciences”

You contend that using even a small extract of a blood component would be tantamount to using whole blood. Some [JWs] draw this conclusion conscientiously and we encourage them to decide matters in accord with the dictates of their consciences.

Others reason differently, feeling beyond a certain point a blood fraction does not remain a significant part of one’s life blood. “The faithful and discreet slave” (Governing Body) has not felt that it can be dogmatic on this point but has left that as something each [JW] must decide for himself before God.—Galatians 6:5.

The WTS admits it did not deal completely with Elder Jensen’s concerns

While we have not dealt with all the details discussed in your letters, we trust that these additional comments will be helpful.

It is evident that matters pertaining to blood have caused you much concern. You have come to the point where you question seriously whether the position of Jehovah’s Witnesses is correct. You have presented your reasoning for consideration.

Once more Elder Jensen is told to “wait on Jehovah (instructing the Governing Body).”

When we have questions on matters that are not immediately resolved after doing research and seeking answers, the wise course is to **wait** humbly upon Jehovah. In our previous letter, we encouraged you to do that, as you continue to serve Jehovah conscientiously.

All the way through, WTS is concerned with loyalty, rather than with Scriptural Truth

Proceeding in this way, in some respects, **will put to the test your faith and trust in Jehovah and the way he is directing his organization today through “the faithful and discreet slave.”**

Two weeks later, on June 9, 2001, Elder Jensen wrote “one last letter on the subject”.

The letter opens with their perceived “Law of Noah”. That discussion relates to the internal doctrines of the JW’s and their controlling body.

Continuing ...

I noticed that your letter does not comment on the conflicting matter addressed in my letter, and discussed on the telephone, about us using from the donated and stored blood supply but forbidding the replenishing of the very same thing we deplete.

In conversation it was stated to me that it is a personal conscience matter whether a [JW] decides to donate blood that will be used in fractionated forms, the same fractionated forms that we likewise leave to personal conscience as to acceptance. I was told that this act being left up to each [JW’s] conscience naturally follows from what we have already published about decisions to accept fractions of blood.

If put on the spot and asked about this issue, I will repeat the same thing told me, that each one must decide this matter for themselves before God as a matter of personal conscience. If asked for verification on this point, I can only show what our publications have stated, and what naturally follows from that.

There was no reply from the WTS to Elder Jensen’s letter.

On January 10, 2003, Elder Jensen submitted his letter of resignation as an Elder.

Dear Brothers

By now you know this letter is about my resignation as an elder. ... Starting in February 1998 I expressed specific and important questions to you brothers about important aspects of what we teach on blood. After a few letters my correspondence dated March 1, 2000 explained in painstaking detail why my questions had not been soundly answered.

“My questions have asked for sound biblical reasons for important details of what we teach and impose”

In spite of this letter and future pleas begging for help and answers to important questions neither was forthcoming beyond mere recognition by sentences like:

“Each time this matter comes up for review by the “slave” class, taking pertinent factors into consideration, including those discussed in your letters, the basic conclusion has been the same, that accepting a transfusion of whole blood, or of its four recognized primary components—red cells, white cells, platelets, or whole plasma—would be contrary to scripture.”

Replies like this from you brothers do not answer important requests for detailed and sound scriptural reasons for what we teach, nor does saying that some feel one way and others feel differently provide a biblical answer for imposing what we do. Statements such as that only say what I already know, that we teach what we teach, that our stance is what our stance is. I know what our religious position is. My questions have asked for sound biblical reasons for important details of what we teach and impose. Alluding to pertinent factors without identification and logical construction of those factors to a sound conclusion is no answer.

“Being given no better replies until now has simply exasperated me”

Given the time, attention and patience I have afforded this subject and you brothers, the inherent importance of the subject, and my sincere and pleading expression of need on the subject, being given no better replies until now has simply exasperated me on this very important subject, one that has often had life sacrificing consequences. Resulting disappointment is something unfamiliar to me given the source, but this only intensifies the distress. ...

“The continued absence of sound scriptural answers to questions asked has begun hurting my conscience as an elder.”

There is no way for me to know why things have happened as they have. I only know my questions and concerns are sincere and were presented honestly and out of loyalty to Jehovah. With one important exception circumstances now remain the same as when I wrote of my inability to teach without knowing reasons for answers. The exception is that the continued absence of sound scriptural answers to questions asked has begun hurting my conscience as an elder since publishers expect us to have reasons for our answers, and teachers should know the reasons for answers to the same detail they teach them, and certainly to the extent they impose them. I do not know those reasons on very important and telling aspects of our stance on blood though I have sought very hard for them.

“It is inappropriate to ask people to wait.”

It is my conviction that today we should have reasons for answers we teach today. Furthermore, we should have reasons for those answers to the same detail that we teach and impose them. Otherwise we should wait before we teach those answers or details. This is waiting on Jehovah. It is inappropriate to ask people to wait for reasons to answers we are already teaching. ...

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The following rendition of 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 illustrates this and offers guidance regarding independent members.

14 For the blood, indeed, is not one member, but many. 15 If the water [of blood] should say: "Because I am not hemoglobin, I am no part of the blood," it is not for this reason no part of the blood. 16 And if the platelets should say: "Because I am not a white cell, I am no part of the blood," it is not for this reason no part of the blood. 17 If the whole blood were white cells, where would the platelets be? If it were all platelets, where would the protein factors be? 18 But now God has set the members in the blood, each one of them, just as he pleased. 19 If they were all one member, where would the blood be? 20 But now they are many members, yet one blood. 21 The white cells cannot say to the hemoglobin: "I have no need of you"; or, again, the red cells [cannot say] to the water: "I have no need of YOU." 22 But much rather is it the case that the members of the blood which seem to be weaker are necessary, 23 and the parts of the blood which we think to be less honorable, these we surround with more abundant honor, and so blood's unseemly parts have the more abundant comeliness, 24 whereas blood's comely parts do not need anything. Nevertheless, God compounded the blood, giving honor more abundant to the part which had a lack, 25 so that there should be no division in the blood, but that its members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it; or if a member is glorified, all the other members rejoice with it.

Just as a fleshly body consists of members functioning together to make a body, so too blood consists of members that function together to make blood.

The rendering above therefore demonstrates how no member of blood equals blood just as no member of the body equals a body. Verse 19 even asks the question, "If they were all one member, where would the blood be?" In view of verse 14 the answer is, if there was only one of the many necessary members then there would be no body, or in this case no blood. There would be only an independent member, not a body, or blood in this case.

Just as each member of the body is necessary to the functioning of the body as Jehovah intended likewise each member of blood is necessary for blood to be what it is. Just as with the body, no matter the size or distinction of members of blood, all of them are just as much part of the blood as every other part.

[Signed R. Jensen]