

April 24, 2008

Brother _____
Presiding Overseer
_____ Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses
151 N _____ Blvd
_____, MS _____

Dear Brother _____:

I would like to offer an explanation regarding the decisions that I have made about my future as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Let me begin by assuring you that I have no animosity towards you or towards anyone in the Watchtower organization. I appreciate your personal efforts in encouraging me to remain in the faith. It has been my privilege to serve joyfully with many outstanding people during the years since 1985. More than six of these years were spent at Brooklyn Bethel, and I enjoyed many wonderful experiences there. Further, I believe that Watchtower is responsible for many fine works.

However, I can no longer support Watchtower's position on blood transfusions. This policy is responsible for the deaths of infants and children. (*Awake!* May 22, 1994)

Freedom of religion is among the greatest freedoms we now enjoy. I believe that competent *adults* should be free to willingly reject blood transfusions on religious grounds. However, imposing Watchtower's position on blood transfusions on children is something I strongly object to. Freedom of religion has boundaries. When the free exercise of religion harms a child in any way – it has surely crossed one of these boundaries.

I was once proud that Witnesses were putting their sincere religious convictions above the immediate health concerns of themselves and their families. I believed that they were making the ultimate sacrifice in order to remain faithful to Jehovah God. Moreover, I believed that this course of action was in harmony with Bible principles.

My views on these issues have changed. One of the things that helped me reach these conclusions is examining some of the older Watchtower publications. Witnesses are encouraged to *make an examination of older publications*, as highlighted in the excerpt below:

“Their zeal for knowledge may even prompt them to dig back into things that were published long before they came into the truth, expanding and deepening their understanding, and ever growing in Christian maturity. . . . Have you really studied these earlier publications? . . . If you are a newer one in the congregation, have you studied just one of the Society’s publications. . . . How can all these people get the things they have missed? Only by studying earlier publications and digging back through previous issues of *The Watchtower* kept in the library at your local Kingdom Hall. There is much in the way of spiritual riches and aids toward mature knowledge in these earlier publications, and their study is most certainly worth your time. By checking back through the Society’s earlier publications you will learn where to find the answers to questions that arise, and you will rejoice to see your understanding continue to grow.” (*The Watchtower*, May 15, 1957, pp. 311-317)

Here are a few examples of what I found in the older publications:

"Vaccination never prevented anything and never will, and is the most barbarous practice . . . We are in the last days; and the devil is slowly losing his hold, making a strenuous effort meanwhile to do all the damage he can, and to his credit can such evils be placed. . . . Use your rights as American citizens to forever abolish the devilish practice of vaccinations." (*The Golden Age*, Oct. 12, 1921, p. 17)

"If any overzealous doctor condemns your tonsils go and commit suicide with a case-knife. It's cheaper and less painful." (*The Golden Age*, April 7, 1926, p. 438)

"Thinking people would rather have smallpox than vaccination, because the latter sows seeds of syphilis, cancers, eczema, erysipelas, scrofula, consumption, even leprosy and many other loathsome affections. Hence the practice of vaccinations is a crime, an outrage, and a delusion" (*The Golden Age*, Jan. 5, 1929, p. 502)

"Vaccination has never saved a human life. It does not prevent smallpox." (*The Golden Age*, Feb. 4, 1931, p. 294)

"We do well to bear in mind that among the drugs, serums, vaccines, surgical operations, etc., of the medical profession, there is nothing of value save an occasional surgical procedure. . . . Readers of *The Golden Age* know the

unpleasant truth about the clergy; they should also know the truth about the medical profession, which sprang from the same demon worshipping shamans (doctor priests) as did the 'doctors of divinity.'" (*The Golden Age*, Aug. 5, 1931, pp. 727-728)

"medicine originated in demonology and spent its time until the last century and a half trying to exorcise demons. During the past half century it has tried to exorcise germs." (*The Golden Age*, Aug. 5, 1931, p. 728)

"When men of science conclude that this normal process will no longer work and they suggest removing the organ and replacing it directly with an organ from another human, this is simply a shortcut. Those who submit to such operations are thus living off the flesh of another human. That is cannibalistic." (*The Watchtower*, Nov. 15, 1967, p. 702)

The bans on vaccines and organ transplants were particularly disturbing to me. (The ban on organ transplants began in 1967 and it was lifted in 1980. *The Watchtower*, Nov. 15, 1967, p. 702; *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31)

When a Witness *chooses* to accept a blood transfusion he is excommunicated from the congregation. In most cases, this judicial action cuts him off from normal association with his dearest friends and family. It seems to me that Watchtower would like health care providers and public officials to believe that Witnesses are making a *personal decision* when they refuse blood transfusions. Watchtower asserts that even minor children can make a choice. How can the decision to refuse or to accept a blood transfusion *truly* be a conscience matter, if the threat of excommunication looms over the Witness faced with such a decision?

Consider this analogy: A hostage victim held by his captor, with a gun placed to his head, could *choose* to run away. However, the very real threat of being shot and killed serves to eliminate such a choice. Thus, I believe that characterizing Watchtower's current position on blood transfusions as a conscientious decision made by each Witness is misleading. The truth is this: *Jehovah's Witnesses are required to refuse blood or else they will be excommunicated.* Such excommunication deems the Witness worthy of everlasting destruction in the eyes of the congregation.

I also find Watchtower's position on "blood fractions" to be quite disturbing. Watchtower currently *allows Witnesses to accept certain blood fractions.* (*The Watchtower*, June 15, 2000, p. 30; June 15, 2004, p. 30) If a Witness chooses to accept one of these fractions, *he will not be excommunicated.* Therefore, we can conclude that Watchtower has drawn a clear distinction between blood fractions and whole blood (along with its four, so-called, "primary components"). For example, if a Witness chooses to accept a transfusion of

hemoglobin, he will not be excommunicated, but he will remain in good standing with the congregation. However, if he chooses to accept a transfusion of plasma, he will be excommunicated. Watchtower says that the Bible forbids the taking in of “primary components” but that “fractions” of those same components are tolerable, since the Bible “does not give details”. However, the Scriptures *do not mention either primary components or fractions*, so I do not believe that such a distinction can be made.

Further, please note that the use of blood fractions *implies the storage and usage of massive amounts of blood!* On the one hand, Watchtower says it is acceptable to use fractions, but on the other hand, they state that they are opposed to all storage of blood. In fact, the prohibition on the *storage* of blood is the *only* reason given by Watchtower to ban the use of autologous blood. Therefore, I must conclude that Watchtower’s position on the storage of blood is arbitrary, inconsistent and contradictory. Further, is it not hypocritical and unethical to be willing to accept a blood fraction *derived from the blood of many donors*, but be opposed to donating blood?

Human blood is a connective tissue. When blood is transfused into the body, it is not broken down and digested. It is used by the human body as blood. Simply put, a blood transfusion replaces lost blood, much in the same way that a kidney transplant replaces a lost kidney. The Bible clearly forbids the eating of blood. (Genesis 9:4) However, since a blood transfusion is similar to an organ transplant, it is not reasonable to equate a blood transfusion with eating blood. Just as a kidney transplant is not the same as eating a kidney, a transfusion of blood is not the same as eating blood. (Watchtower has compared a blood transfusion with infusing alcohol into the veins. However, alcohol is very different. It is already in a form that the blood can absorb and *use as a nutrient*. A transfusion of blood simply replaces lost blood. A person dying from hunger cannot be sustained via blood transfusions. The body does not derive nourishment from a blood transfusion. *The body does not use blood for food*. Therefore, alcohol and blood are completely different in this respect. Watchtower’s comparison is therefore invalid, in my opinion.)

Were you aware that no Jewish group today forbids blood transfusions? This is because Jewish kosher probations are waived in regards to life-saving medical use. They believe that sustaining life overrules the Mosaic Law; a principle referred to as “pikuach nefesh”. Jesus showed that Christians are to follow this principle when he healed and harvested on the Sabbath. He used David as an example to show that *acts of mercy, such as saving a life, are more important than strict adherence to regulation*. Consider Jesus’ words:

“Who will be the man among YOU that has one sheep and, if this falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not get hold of it and lift it out? All considered, of how much more worth is a man than a sheep!” (Matthew 12:11, 12a)

The Bible is silent on the topic of blood transfusions. However, I am deeply interested in *how God feels about the matter*. The following illustration has been helpful to me: If you were robbed and a thief demanded your wedding ring, would you refuse to give it to him if he threatened to kill your spouse? Would you reason: "This ring represents my marriage to my spouse and that's more important than my spouse's life"? *Such reasoning is seriously flawed yet this is the exact reasoning used by Watchtower to support its ban on certain types of blood transfusions*. Yes, blood is a symbol of life, but *life itself is certainly more valuable than the symbol!*

The blood issue could become a life-or-death issue for me or my family at any moment. Should I blindly follow Watchtower? Much of what Watchtower has published regarding medical issues cannot be accurately described as "food at the proper time". I have carefully weighed what the Scriptures say about blood and respect for life. I have concluded that there is nothing wrong with blood transfusions. Nor can I find any Scriptural support for the practice of excommunicating persons who choose to accept blood. *My views bring me clearly into conflict with the Watchtower organization.*

Jehovah's Witnesses are required to believe that Watchtower is God's sole channel of communication on the earth today. As such, I cannot help but ask some troubling questions: Were Watchtower's past teachings on vaccines and organ transplants 'light' from Jehovah? Or, were they the opinions of imperfect men – human wisdom? I am unable to dismiss these past incorrect teachings by simply saying that "the light got brighter". This explanation is a way of *blaming Jehovah* for Watchtower's past mistakes. How so? When the original doctrines were printed in the literature, *they were presented as God's thoughts*, not the opinions of men. Witnesses are required to accept printed counsel as coming from Jehovah, not from an imperfect group of men. You and I have the luxury of knowing that the past doctrines regarding vaccines and organ transplants were merely an *incorrect human interpretation* of Scripture.

Why did I previously accept Watchtower's teachings on blood transfusions? I believed that these teachings were based on the Bible. When I first became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I was told (and I sincerely believed for more than two decades) that the Witnesses follow what the Bible says on all matters. It is certainly true that Watchtower does closely adhere to God's word in many respects. However, an honest examination has revealed to me that many Watchtower rules and teachings are based upon a *unique interpretation of the Scriptures*. These unique interpretations were authored by the various Presidents of the Watchtower Society, and more recently, the Governing Body. Total acceptance of these unique interpretations is demanded of each Witness. (*The Watchtower*, April 1, 1986, p. 31) In my own case, this involved accepting rules and teachings that I was unable to explain using the Bible.

Please consider the two excerpts below:

“The Scriptures show that if we are part of any organization that is bloodguilty before God, we must sever our ties with it if we do not want to share in its sins.” (Rev. 18:4, 24; Mic. 4:3) (*United in Worship*, 1983, Chap. 20, p. 155, par. 4)

“If, after making an honest investigation, you are less than pleased with what you see, do more than just complain. . . . Church members . . . are responsible for what the church says and does. So ask yourself: Am I willing to share responsibility for everything my church says and does? . . . But your life depends upon being 100 percent sure. . . . Make your choice accordingly.” (*Awake!*, Sept. 8, 1987, pp. 19-11)

These excerpts indicate that members of a church bear a measure of responsibility for what their church says and does. My conscience will no longer allow me to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, in association with Watchtower. I cannot support an organization that promotes an unscriptural teaching on blood that results in the needless death of men, women and children.

Man-made rules and laws which don’t have clear Scriptural support are what I consider to be “commands of men”. (Mark 7:7) Further, there is no Biblical command to blindly follow any man or human organization. To the contrary, the Bible tells us that the “head of every man is the Christ”. (1 Corinthians 11:3) It further tells Christians to “keep testing” and to “keep proving” whether they are in the faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5) The Bible also warns us against placing our trust in “earthling man”. (Psalm 146:3) My examination of the blood issue has caused me to realize that *much* of my faith was not truly my own. I allowed an imperfect human organization – Watchtower – to be elevated to a higher position than Jesus Christ in my life. I no longer believe many of the teachings of the Governing Body nor do I believe that God is using Watchtower as his sole channel on earth today. I feel compelled to rely on the Scriptures as the ultimate authority on *all things* spiritual. Therefore, I have made a decision to be guided by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit, and to look to Jesus Christ as my Head.

The conclusions I have reached and set forth in this letter have caused me great distress. I have spent most of my life in association with Watchtower. It is with great sadness that I find myself in this position. I will lose the friendship and respect of hundreds of people that I genuinely care for as my spiritual brothers and sisters. My motives and my character will likely be called into question by more than a few.

However, along with this great sadness I also have great joy. I now realize that it is not Jehovah’s desire that babies and little children – or any of His earthly children – should die by refusing blood. I now believe, as modern Jews believe, that refusing to accept a blood transfusion in order to save my life would show a gross disrespect for the life given to me by the Creator. I have great peace of mind knowing that my children will not suffer

because of Watchtower's teaching on blood. I am also finding great joy as I learn "the good news about Jesus Christ" from my ongoing study of the Bible. (Mark 1:1)

This letter represents my formal disassociation from the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses and from Watchtower.

I do not wish to receive any phone calls, letters or personal visits to discuss my decision to disassociate myself. Further, in the event of my death, I do not wish to be remembered as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In addition, I am making the request that you not attempt to proselytize my children in any way.

Finally, I want you to know that I do not consider my personal friendship with you and with others in the organization to be conditional. Regardless of your standing within the Watchtower organization, you may be assured of my continuing Christian love and affection.

Sincerely,

[LeavingWT]

Cc: Unspecified List