

In the Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Greg Stafford takes up the familiar defense of subjects having to do with the use and pronunciation of the divine name, the identity of the biblical God Jah and of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as issues and questions having to do with salvation, God's sovereignty and mankind's "free will." This edition also contains discussions of several controversial issues, including questions related to abortion, a person's sexual orientation, and regarding uses of blood.

Most significantly, this book puts forth not only a defense of some the biblical teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but it also further introduces the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah's Witnesses who reject human traditions when these can be shown to contradict what is based on the best available reasons. Thus, a call is made to all Jehovah's Witnesses, to all Christians, indeed, to "every breathing thing" to bear witness to and to praise the biblical God Jah, and to acknowledge what can be shown to be true for good reasons about Jesus of Nazareth.—Psalm 150:6; Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12; Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 1:10; Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

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GREG STAFFORD is also the author of *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* and of various articles and debates on biblical Christianity and the history and the beliefs of the Watchtower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses. He is a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects traditions and beliefs that are not based on the best available evidence.



Cover design by George Foster

Religion

ISBN: 978-0-9659814-0-6



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AN ANSWER  
TO SCHOLARS  
AND CRITICS

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THIRD  
EDITION

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STAFFORD



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GREG STAFFORD



Murrieta, California

*Jehovah's Witnesses Defended:*  
*An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Third Edition  
Copyright © 2009 by Elihu Books, LLC.

Published by Elihu Books, LLC.

www.elihubooks.com

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Murrieta, CA 92563

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Printed in the United States of America by  
Angel Printing, Inc., Oceanside, California

\*This printed edition may differ in form and in content from pre-publication copies of some of the material released online by the author. Only the printed forms of this book contain the published edition.

**Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication**  
*(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)*

Stafford, Greg G.

Jehovah's Witnesses defended : an answer to scholars  
and critics / by Greg Stafford. -- 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

LCCN 2008905531

ISBN-13: 978-0-9659814-0-8

ISBN-10: 0-9659814-0-1

1. Jehovah's Witnesses--Doctrines. 2. Jehovah's  
Witnesses--Apologetic works. I. Title.

BX8526.S69 2009

289.9'2

QBI08-600184

must also try our best to be “pleasing all people in all things, not seeking [our] own advantage but that of the many, in order that [we] might get saved” (1 Corinthians 10:32-33). Christians reach out to all persons, not judgmentally, but by accepting each other for who we are and then by working together to better ourselves in accordance with the will of Jah God through faith in Jesus. Though at times we may struggle and even fall, if we get up and work hard at gaining control over our sexual desires we can still be presented ‘as a bride for our husband.’—1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Revelation 21:2, 9.

## Uses of Blood

To ‘use’ blood it must first be removed from an animal or from a human and then the blood or parts of it are used, tested, processed, stored, or discarded. Before blood is removed from an animal or from a human, it carries “nourishment, electrolytes, hormones, vitamins, antibodies, heat, and oxygen to the tissues and [blood takes] away waste matter and carbon dioxide.”<sup>18</sup> Note that blood itself is *not* itself any of the things which it carries or removes from the body. Thus, one of the questions for Christians and for others today is whether the Bible speaks against any uses of blood?

The clearest uses of blood which the Bible can be shown to have prohibited in both OT and NT times are eating blood and eating “flesh with its soul—its blood,” or “things strangled” (compare Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:10-14; Acts 15:29; but see Deuteronomy 14:21), as I will explain further in this section. In order to properly evaluate other uses of blood (that is, other than eating it *as food*), we must first ask what uses of blood were known, practiced, and/or expressly prohibited in biblical times. Then we can determine how any such prohibitions might apply to similar or other uses of blood today.

As noted above, in the OT the Bible prohibits the eating of blood and of “flesh with ... blood.” Further, in the NT book of Acts there are three texts which express the early Christian

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<sup>18</sup> *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, Clayton L. Thomas, ed., 16th edition (Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis Company, 1989), page 223, under **Blood**.

perspective on the use of blood, namely, Acts 15:20, 29, and 21:25. Though I will discuss these texts in greater detail later in this section, when blood is eaten *as food* it is broken down and consumed through the digestion process. However, blood circulating in the body *as blood* carries the “nourishment” provided by food. Thus, the two processes of eating blood *as food* and transfusing blood *as blood* are vastly different from each other. Again, eaten blood is a food and after it is eaten and digested like other foods it may provide some nourishment which blood serving *as blood* “carries” throughout the body. Transfused blood is not itself food and it itself is not “nourishment” for the body. That is why if a person who is malnourished or starving is given only an injection of blood, the injected (but not eaten) blood will *not* save a person from malnourishment or from starving.

In spite of the fact that transfused blood is not used *as food* for the body, members of the Watchtower Society reject medical transfusions of whole blood *and* transfusions of blood’s four primary components (red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma).<sup>19</sup> Previously I have written on the subject of Jehovah’s Witnesses and blood transfusions, and in my prior writings I presented arguments in support of and arguments against the different teachings published by the Society on the use of blood.<sup>20</sup> I also presented evidence from the Watchtower Society’s publications to support the following partial timeline for the Society’s blood policy since 1930:

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<sup>19</sup> See the Society’s answers to the “Questions from Readers” published in *The Watchtower*, June 15, 2000, pages 29-31, and the “Questions from Readers” published in *The Watchtower*, June 15, 2004, pages 29-31. However, it should be noted that some recent adjustments in the Society’s blood policy may permit a Witness loyal to the Society to re-use his or her own withdrawn blood. For example, in a September 19, 2000, Press Release issued by the Office of Public Information of Jehovah’s Witnesses who are associated with the Watchtower Society, we read (with underlining added), “When it comes to hemodilution, cell salvage, or other procedures such as withdrawing blood to tag it or mix it with medicine and returning it to the patient ... a Christian must decide for himself ...” Thus, there is a sense in which a Christian associated with the Watchtower Society can have his or her own blood ‘withdrawn’ to a point where it can be ‘tagged or mixed with medicine and then returned to the patient.’

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 8 of my *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Second Edition (Huntington Beach, CA: Elihu Books, 2000), pages 427-446, and the Third Dissertation of my *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2002), pages 170-196.

- 1930: First reference to blood transfusions in the *Watch Tower*, which are listed along with “medicines,” “transplanting of monkey glands,” “massage,” “diet,” “surgery,” and other similar procedures and remedies as some of the means by which “imperfect, fallen men” have tried to cure the different ailments of our society.<sup>21</sup>
- 1934: First positive reference involving the use of blood for transfusions.<sup>22</sup>
- 1936: First time the Society applies the biblical prohibition against eating and drinking blood to “any other means,” though blood transfusions are not named explicitly.<sup>23</sup>
- 1940: Second positive reference to blood transfusions, again in the context of saving a person’s life.<sup>24</sup>
- 1943: Second time “the divine prohibition as to eating or partaking of blood” is extended to ‘other means,’ namely, to the use of cow’s and horse’s blood for human medical transfusions.<sup>25</sup>
- 1944: First explicit inclusion of a blood “transfusion” in the prohibitions against eating blood given in Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:10-14.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “God’s Kingdom is Here,” *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, October 15, 1930, page 315.

<sup>22</sup> “Using the Blood of Suicides,” *The Golden Age*, January 17, 1934, vol. 15, no. 374, page 242, where we read (with underlining added):

It has been discovered that, if used within a few hours after death, the blood of suicides, or those who die of heart disease, or skull fractures, can be used for transfusion purposes to save the lives of the living. This is now done regularly in the Moscow hospital.

<sup>23</sup> “A Letter to the Lancaster (Pa.) School Board,” *The Golden Age*, January 15, 1936, vol. 27, no. 426, pages 233-234.

<sup>24</sup> See “The Mending of a Heart,” *Consolation*, December 25, 1940, page 19, which reads in part (with underlining added):

In New York city a housewife in moving a boarder’s things accidentally shot herself through the heart with his revolver. She was rushed to a hospital, her left breast was cut around, four ribs were cut away, the heart was lifted out, three stitches were taken, one of the attending physicians in the great emergency gave a quart of his blood for transfusion, and today the woman lives and smiles gaily over what happened to her in the busiest 23 minutes of her life.

<sup>25</sup> “Horse Blood for Transfusions,” *Consolation*, December 22, 1943, page 23.

<sup>26</sup> “The Stranger’s Right Maintained,” *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1944, page 362, par. 32, which reads in part (with underlining added):

- 1945: The 1944 position which linked blood transfusions with the prohibitions against eating blood given in Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:10-14 is reaffirmed, though there is not yet any explicit, binding prohibition against blood transfusions put forth by the Society.<sup>27</sup>
- 1948-  
1950: The Society firmly links blood transfusions with the biblical prohibitions against eating blood. However, at this time individual members of the Society could still decide whether to have a blood transfusion, that is, without fear of being excommunicated or shunned by other members.<sup>28</sup>
- 1951-  
1953: Taking a blood transfusion is referred to as “disobedience of God’s commands” which “could cost one eternal life,”<sup>29</sup> though at this time individual members of the congregation

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Not only as a descendant of Noah, but now also as one bound by God’s law to Israel which incorporated the everlasting covenant regarding the sanctity of life-sustaining blood, the stranger was forbidden to eat or drink blood, whether by transfusion or by the mouth. (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10-14)

<sup>27</sup> “Immovable for the Right to Worship,” *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1945, under the heading “Sanctity of Blood,” on page 199, par. 18. See also page 201, par. 25, where we read about not taking “blood directly into the human body.”

<sup>28</sup> See “Dangers of Blood Transfusion,” *Awake!* October 22, 1948, page 12; “Is Blood Transfusion Scriptural?” *Awake!* September 22, 1949, pages 25-27; “On Blood Transfusion,” *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1949, pages 367-368; “Further on Blood Transfusions,” *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1950, pages 143-144.

<sup>29</sup> “Questions from Readers,” *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1951, pages 414-416. In one of the responses to the questions published in this *Watchtower*, we are told (with underlining added): “Any saving of life accomplished by transfusions is short-lived. And doing it in disobedience of God’s commands could cost one eternal life.” But in response to the final question this same *Watchtower* reads, “Jehovah’s Witnesses do not oppose the people’s right to decide for himself what he can conscientiously do.” However, what follows in the remainder of its answer is clearly written to help members of the Society understand this in reference to non-Witnesses (see “Questions from Readers,” July 1, 1951, pages 414-416). In “Questions from Readers,” *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1952, page 96, the Society writes that it does not “advise on health matters except as they may involve Scriptural issues, such as in the case of blood transfusions.” In “Tolerance for Unity and Increase,” *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1952, page 551, we read (with underlining added), “Regardless of how unpopular it may make them, they will refuse to heel men, to bow down to any image or likeness, to take blood transfusions, etc.” In “The Bible and Medical Science,” *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1953, page 451, blood transfusions are again said to be prohibited by the OT and NT commands concerning the eating and drinking of blood, though once again nothing is said about punishing members of the organization who take blood transfusions.



were still permitted to decide whether to have a blood transfusion without fear of excommunication.

- 1954: For the first time the Society singles out a blood *fraction* in connection with the Bible's prohibitions against eating blood. The use of the blood protein gamma globulin for inoculations in the fight against poliomyelitis is said to be "in the same category as blood transfusions as far as Jehovah's prohibition of taking blood into the system is concerned," because it is "made of whole blood."<sup>30</sup>
- 1956: Blood fractions are again said to "come under scriptural ban" against blood, this time with the blood protein "albumin" mentioned by name.<sup>31</sup>
- 1958: The Society changes its previous position by no longer considering blood fractions taken from whole blood (such as gamma globulin) as prohibited by Bible's teachings against eating blood.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Gamma Globulin Versus Poliomyelitis," *Awake!* January 8, 1954, page 24. See also, "Thirteen-Year-Old Berlin Girl Keeps Integrity," *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1954, page 605; "Using Life in Harmony with the Will of God," *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1961, pages 559-566.

<sup>31</sup> "Blood Fractions or Substances," *Awake!* September 8, 1956, page 20.

<sup>32</sup> See "Questions from Readers," *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1958, page 478. Also, in "Questions from Readers," *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1958, on page 575 the Society responds to a question about whether the injection of serums and blood fractions (such as gamma globulin) for the purpose of building up resistance to disease is the same as drinking or transfusing blood or blood plasma. Consider the Society's answer (with underlining added):

No, it does not seem necessary that we put the two in the same category, although we have done so in times past. Each time the prohibition of blood is mentioned in the Scriptures it is in connection with taking it as food, and so it is as a nutrient that we are concerned with in its being forbidden. ... The injection of antibodies into the blood in a vehicle of blood serum or the use of blood fractions to create such antibodies is not the same as taking blood, either by mouth or by transfusion, as a nutrient to build up the body's vital forces. While God did not intend for man to contaminate his blood stream by vaccines, serums or [the use of] blood fractions, doing so does not seem to be included in God's expressed will forbidding blood as food. It would [now, late in 1958,] therefore be a matter of individual judgment whether one accepted such types of medication or not.

Again, transfused blood is *not* usable as "food" or as "nourishment" but only *as blood* which carries "nourishment ... to the tissues" (*Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, quoted earlier on page 570). The Society is in error in viewing transfused blood as if it is "food" or "nourishment," and in the process it has misapplied biblical texts which prohibit the use of blood as a "food" to medical transfusions of blood which are not for "food."

- 1959: For the first time the Society teaches its members that “the removal of one’s blood, storing it and later putting it back into the same person” is “a violation of the Scriptural principles that govern the handling of blood.” The Society also taught that even if the removal and storage of a person’s own blood is “for a brief period of time, this would be a violation of the Scriptures.”<sup>33</sup> The only exception is if “hemorrhaging should occur at the time of an operation and by some means the blood is immediately channeled back into the body, this would be allowable.”<sup>34</sup>
- 1961: The first explicit indication that a person associated with the Watchtower Society should be “disfellowshipped” if he or she refuses to accept that it is scripturally wrong to receive a blood transfusion, or to donate one’s own blood for medical transfusions. The Society’s reasoning here is, in part:

God’s law definitely says that the soul of man is in his blood [see Lev 17:11]. Hence the receiver of the blood transfusion is feeding upon a God-given soul as contained in the blood vehicle of a fellow man or of fellow men. This is a violation of God’s commands to Christians, the seriousness of which should not be minimized by any passing over of it lightly as being an optional matter for the conscience of any individual to decide upon.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “Questions from Readers,” *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1959, page 640.

<sup>34</sup> “Questions from Readers,” *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1959, page 640. Note the further qualification given by the Society in this regard on the same page (with underlining added):

The use of another person’s blood to “prime” any device employed in surgery is objectionable. In this case the blood would circulate through the system of the patient, becoming mixed with his own. Again, if one’s own blood would have to be withdrawn at intervals and stored until a sufficient amount had accumulated to set a machine in operation, this too would fall under Scriptural prohibition. The ones involved in the matter are in the best position to ascertain just how the blood would be handled and must bear responsibility before Jehovah for seeing that it is not handled unscripturally.

<sup>35</sup> “Questions from Readers,” *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1961, page 64. In the Society’s answer we are also told that if a Witness does take a blood transfusion because of weakness or immaturity, but then “begs divine forgiveness and forgiveness of God’s congregation on earth,” mercy should be “extended to him and he need not be disfellowshipped.” However, the person must “be put under surveillance” and “be instructed thoroughly according to the Scriptures upon this subject” (“Questions from Readers,” January 15, 1961, page 64 [underlining added]).

The Watchtower Society refers to the receipt of a blood transfusion as if it is equivalent to “feeding.” Indeed, the *Watchtower* claims “the receiver of a blood transfusion” is actually “feeding upon a God-given soul as contained in the blood”! As I explained previously, a transfusion of blood is not the same thing as eating blood through the mouth. Eaten blood is digested as a food, while transfused blood remains usable as blood in our bodies. The Society has consistently failed to note this critical difference, which when considered shows there is no “feeding upon a God-given soul” taking place during a blood transfusion. More blood is simply being put into a human body to serve as blood, not to serve as food or “nourishment.” Transfused blood “carries” nourishment throughout the body; it is not itself the nourishment on which the body feeds.

Later in 1961, *The Watchtower* published an article called “Respect for the Sanctity of Blood.” In harmony with the earlier January 15, 1961 “Questions from Readers” (quoted on page 575), this article points out that God’s laws to Noah and to Moses prohibited the use of blood for food *and* the storing of one’s own blood because “the soul or the life of the flesh is in the blood.”<sup>36</sup> The *Watchtower* also claims that even in times of emergency the Bible speaks out against the eating of blood:

Even in times of emergency it was recognized that there was no justification for setting aside the divine law concerning the sanctity of blood. This is shown by an occurrence when the army of Israel under King Saul was fighting the Philistines. It had been a hard fight and the men were at the point of exhaustion. “And the people began darting greedily at the spoil and taking sheep and cattle and calves and slaughtering them on the earth, and the people fell to eating along with the blood.” This was no insignificant thing, excusable because of the physical condition of the men. It was reported to Saul: “Look! The people are sinning against Jehovah by eating along with the blood.” (1 Sam. 14:32, 33) They did not view the matter as do certain rabbis today who theorize that any of the

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<sup>36</sup> “Respect for the Sanctity of Blood,” *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1961, page 554, par. 4.

requirements of the Law can be set aside when the saving of a specific life is involved.<sup>37</sup> [Underlining added.]

Here the Watchtower Society presents texts from 1 Samuel Chapter 14 as if they support the Society's own view that even if a person's life is at risk, blood should not be eaten even it is to save a person's life. Setting aside the separate question of whether transfusing blood *as blood* (not as food) is the same as eating blood *as food* (which is no longer usable as blood), there is nothing written in 1 Samuel 14:31-35 which says anything about people starving to death. Rather, the account states plainly that the people were "very tired" and "greedily" plundered the spoil, eating sheep, cattle, and calves before bleeding them.

It is this inaction with respect to "flesh with its soul—its blood," that is in view in 1 Samuel 14:31-35, for it violates the Noachian and the Mosaic laws concerning the eating of flesh with its blood (Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23; but compare Deuteronomy 14:21). Saul rebuked those who ate 'flesh with its blood,' telling them, "Bring near to me, each one of you, his bull and, each one, his sheep, and you must do the slaughtering in this place and the eating, and you must not sin against Jehovah by eating along with the blood" (verse 34 [underlining added]). There is nothing said here in this account about the "saving of a specific life," as the *Watchtower* claims. Further, this account has nothing to do with using blood *as blood*, but with "eating" it *as food*.

This *Watchtower* cites additional biblical accounts in support of its hardened position against blood transfusions, including 1 Chronicles 11:16-19 and 2 Samuel 23:14-17. In these accounts, David expresses his desire for "a drink of the water from the cistern of Bethlehem that is at the gate." Because of this, "three mighty men" in David's service go into the Philistine camp to draw water from the cistern and they bring it to David. David responds by pouring the water out and saying, "[Shall I drink] the blood of the men going at the risk of their souls?" The Watchtower Society interprets David's rejection of the water as if the water was actually blood, concluding that "not only did

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<sup>37</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," page 554, par. 5.

[David] abstain from animal blood [but] he avoided the far more gross wrong of consuming human blood"!<sup>38</sup>

The biblical record reveals it is *the life-threatening actions* of the three men which David rejected, not their actual "blood." Because these men risked their lives for something David could (and did) do without, David rejected the water since they had risked their lives to get it. But donating blood for others to use in medical treatments or emergencies does not carry with it the same risks as those who, according to 2 Samuel 23:16, "forced their way into the camp of the Philistines and drew water from the cistern of Bethlehem that is at the gate and came carrying and bringing it to David." Thus, the Watchtower Society has again misapplied a biblical account which has nothing to do even with eating or drinking literal blood. Rather, it has to do with *unnecessarily risking our lives*, which is precisely what those who refuse acceptable medical treatments are doing.

This same 1961 *Watchtower* article mentions products made with dried plasma powder, which were used as a substitute for eggs in pastries, as well as "various tonics and tablets sold by druggists [who] show on their labels that they contain blood fractions such as hemoglobin."<sup>39</sup> *The Watchtower* then advises its readers to be cautious about such ingredients, and to do what is necessary to avoid them if they contain blood or blood fractions. After noting the progress made in the use of medical transfusions of blood, *The Watchtower* article points out that "doctors use not only whole blood and blood plasma, which is the nearly colorless liquid in which the blood cells are carried, but also red cells apart from the plasma, and the various plasma proteins as they feel the need."<sup>40</sup> How are such medical treatments to be viewed by members of the Watchtower Society? *The Watchtower* answers:

Is God's law violated by such medical use of blood? Is it wrong to sustain life by infusions of blood or plasma or red cells or the various blood fractions? Yes! The law that God gave to Noah and which applies to all his descendants makes it

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<sup>38</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," page 559, par. 20.

<sup>39</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," page 557, par. 14. These same comments are repeated in the booklet, *Blood, Medicine and The Law of God* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1961), page 11.

<sup>40</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," page 558, par. 15.

wrong for anyone to eat blood, that is, to use the blood of another creature to nourish or sustain one's life. ... [R]egardless of whether it is whole blood or a blood fraction, whether it is blood taken from one's own body or that taken from someone else, whether it is administered as a transfusion or as an injection, the divine law applies.<sup>41</sup>

As the above clearly shows, the Watchtower Society at one time prohibited those loyal to its teachings from donating blood for medical transfusions and for 'sustaining life' by "infusions of blood or plasma or red cells or the various blood fractions." The Society's law is here said to be binding on all of its members, "regardless of whether it is whole blood or a blood fraction." From this point forward, then, any member of the Watchtower Society who unrepentantly disagreed with this new blood policy (which now prohibited use of whole blood *and* "various blood fractions") "must be cut off by disfellowshipping."<sup>42</sup>

Later in 1961, *The Watchtower* carried a series of questions and answers concerning different uses of blood.<sup>43</sup> In response to the first question, *The Watchtower* explained that a person should investigate to see if the albumin in a food product is from blood, from milk, or from eggs. "However," *The Watchtower* concludes, "if the label says that certain tablets contain hemoglobin [a blood fraction], similar checking will reveal that this [hemoglobin] is from blood; so a Christian knows, without asking, that he should avoid such a preparation."<sup>44</sup> In response to

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<sup>41</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," pages 558, 559, pars. 16 and 19 (underlining added). See also *Blood, Medicine and The Law of God*, page 14.

<sup>42</sup> "Questions from Readers," January 15, 1961, page 64.

<sup>43</sup> "Questions from Readers," *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1961, page 669-670. The questions presented are: "How can one tell if meat purchased from a butcher or in some other market has been properly bled?" ... "Also, how can one tell if cold-meat loaves, pastry or preparations sold by druggists contain any blood or blood fractions?" ... "How can we harmonize the Scriptural counsel, 'Everything that is sold in a meat market keep eating, making no inquiry on account of your conscience' (1 Cor. 10:25), with the advice recently contained in *The Watchtower*, to make reasonable inquiry at places where one buys meat to be sure that it has been properly bled? (*The Watchtower*, September 15, 1961, page 557)" ... "In view of the Bible command on abstinence from blood, how are fish and insects to be prepared in order to be acceptable for food?" "Since the Bible forbids the eating of blood, how are Christians to view the use of serums and vaccines? Has the Society changed its viewpoint on this?"

<sup>44</sup> "Questions from Readers," *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1961, page 669 (underlining added).

the third question about the use of serums and vaccines, *The Watchtower* claims:

The Bible is very clear that blood could properly be used only on the altar; otherwise it was to be poured out on the ground. (Lev. 17:11-13) The entire modern medical practice involving the use of blood is objectionable from the Christian standpoint. Therefore the taking of a blood transfusion, or, in lieu of that, the infusing of some blood fraction to sustain one's life is wrong.<sup>45</sup>

In 1961 another one of the Society's publications was even more specific when addressing the use of blood fractions, stating that Jehovah's Witnesses would not consent to the medical use of "any kind of blood transfusion, or, in place of it, an infusion of any kind of blood fraction or substance."<sup>46</sup> Yet, since 1961 the Society's position has evolved to the point where today a member of the Watchtower Society can decide for him- or for herself whether to take "any kind of blood fraction or substance" (including hemoglobin), except for these four blood components: Red cells, white cells, plasma, and platelets, none of which are individually "blood." In fact, today members of the Watchtower Society are permitted (that is, without any investigation by the Society's appointed representatives) to decide whether to donate their own blood for the purpose of obtaining a fraction from one these four (Society-prohibited) blood components.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "Questions from Readers," *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1961, page 670 (underlining added). See also "Carry Your Own Load of Responsibility," *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1963, where on page 124 we read in part (with underlining added):

As to blood transfusions, [a Christian] knows from his study of the Bible and the publications of the Watch Tower Society that this is an unscriptural practice. (Gen. 9:4; Acts 15:28, 29) Now it is up to him to carry his own load of responsibility in applying what the Scriptures have to say on this matter. One day he may go to the hospital for surgery. ... He need only ask the doctor: "From what was the plasma taken?" "How are the red cells obtained?" "Where did you get this substance?" If the answer is "Blood," he knows what course to take, for it is not just whole blood but anything that is derived from blood and used to sustain life or strengthen one that comes under this principle.

<sup>46</sup> *Blood, Medicine and The Law of God*, page 39 (underlining added).

<sup>47</sup> See my *Three Dissertations*, pages 190-195, in particular the letter from one of the Society's agencies (the "Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses") to Cliff Roche dated July 30, 2001.

A significant part of the problem with the Society's blood policy has to do with its unsupportable equation of eating blood *as food* with using blood *as blood*. Consider the following claim made by the Society, also published in 1961, after its ban against medical transfusions of whole blood and its ban against blood fractions in 1956 which the Society changed in 1958:

It is of no consequence that the blood is taken into the body through the veins instead of the mouth. Nor does the claim by some that it is not the same as intravenous feeding carry weight. The fact is that it nourishes or sustains the life of the body. In harmony with this is a statement in the book *Hemorrhage and Transfusion*, by George W. Crile, A.M., M.D., who quotes a letter from Denys, French physician and early researcher in the field of transfusions. It says: "In performing transfusion it is nothing else than nourishing by a shorter road than ordinary—that is to say, placing in the veins blood all made in place of taking food which only turns to blood after several changes."<sup>48</sup>

Before I further address this question about whether a blood transfusion involves using blood *as food* or "nourishment," I will here give an extended quotation from an online response to the Society's use of *Hemorrhage and Transfusion*, by George W. Crile, A.M., M.D. In the cited publication is a letter from the "French physician and early researcher" referenced by *The Watchtower*. After noting "the Society did not inform anyone that Jean Babtiste Denys had done his research in the 1600's and had been dead for 257 years by 1961," Zack Daniels writes:

When viewed in its proper context, it is obvious that Crile was simply providing a historical narrative of the accidents, ignorance, and mistakes that befell the early researchers in this field and not seriously agreeing with the humorous level of ignorance which he had found in a 252 year old (in 1909) research paper. Further, no one in their right mind even in 1909, let alone 1961, would have seriously believed Deny's own reason for making that statement—that the blood of the mother was continuously transfused into the body of the infant.

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<sup>48</sup> "Respect for the Sanctity of Blood," *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1961, page 558, par. 18 (underlining added).



... For anyone in 1961 with even a high school education to claim that the body was directly nourished by the blood was absurd. Your blood carries nourishment to the cells of your body. This is done by the blood plasma and its solutes. Each and every cell of your body is nourished on an individual basis by being in direct contact with the blood stream. Your digestive system breaks the food you eat down into soluble materials that can diffuse into the plasma, namely amino acids, simple sugars, fatty acids, trace elements (vitamins and minerals) and water. The plasma, being mostly water itself, functions simply as the means of conveyance, in a manner analogous to the way your hand is the means of conveyance whereby nourishment is carried to your mouth. You don't bite the fingers off of your hand and swallow them when you eat, and the individual cells of your body do not devour your blood as it goes by and this was certainly known in the 1950's and early 60's. Despite this though, the Society's statements on the blood issue during this time period all reflected this mistaken idea.<sup>49</sup>

There was no such thing in biblical times as a strictly medical (that is, a non-religious, non-dietary) use of blood, such as we find today in medical transfusion therapy. In spite of this, the Watchtower Society equates blood which is eaten and then digested *as food* with blood that is transfused to remain and to serve *as blood* in the human body, which is the very purpose for which Jah made blood. Consider the following presentation by the Society about why blood transfusions should be refused:

*Q. Why did Octávio Corrêa refuse the blood transfusion?*

A. Basically because of the Bible's prohibition as to the use of blood for nourishment or to prolong life. The *Great Encyclopedia Delta Larousse* (Portuguese) says: "Blood is living tissue that runs in the circulatory system and whose main functions are: 1) to carry needed nutritive substances and oxygen to all tissues in the body; 2) to collect and take residues, useless or dangerous to the cellular activity, to the excretory organs (kidneys, lungs, skin, etc.)." (P. 6079) Thus,

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<sup>49</sup> Zack Daniels, "The Evolution of the Watchtower Blood Policy," published online at the Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood web site ([www.ajwrb.org](http://www.ajwrb.org)). Article link: <http://www.ajwrb.org/history/index.shtml#evolution>.

blood nourishes and cleans the body. Jehovah God, who knows more about blood than anyone else, prohibited the eating of blood. His Word, the Bible, states: “Only do not eat flesh with its life in it, that is, the blood.”—Gen. 9:4, Pontifical Bible Institute, Rome, Paulinas Editions, Brazil. [Underlining added.]<sup>50</sup>

The Watchtower publication *Awake!* here quotes a source which speaks of blood as ‘carrying needed nutritive substances.’ But the Society then equates “eating of blood” with transfusing blood! The Society has failed to note the evident differences between eaten blood and transfused blood, even when it quotes a publication which makes the differences plain! In this same light, consider these more recent claims from *The Watchtower*:

Decades ago Jehovah’s Witnesses made their stand clear. For example, they supplied an article to *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (November 27, 1981; reprinted in *How Can Blood Save Your Life?* pages 27-9). That article quoted from [1] *Genesis, Leviticus, and Acts*. It said: “While these verses are not stated in medical terms, *Witnesses view them as ruling out transfusion of whole blood, packed RBCs [red blood cells], and plasma, as well as WBC [white blood cell] and platelet administration.*” [2] *The 2001 textbook Emergency Care, under “Composition of the Blood,” stated: “The blood is made up of several components: plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets.”* [3] *Thus, in line with medical facts, Witnesses refuse transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components.*<sup>51</sup>

I have added emphasis to three key claims in the above quote from *The Watchtower*. I have also numbered each point in order to help separate them and to make for an easier evaluation of the claims made:

**[1]: *Genesis, Leviticus, and Acts ... [rule] out transfusion[s] of whole blood, packed [red blood cells], and plasma, as well as [white blood cells] and platelet administration.***

<sup>50</sup> “Freedom of Worship Triumphant,” *Awake!* August 8, 1977, page 7.

<sup>51</sup> “Be Guided by the Living God,” *The Watchtower*, June 15, 2004, pages 21-22, par. 11 (emphasis added).

Comment: Not one text in any of the three biblical books referenced by *The Watchtower* says or even implies anything about using blood for medical transfusions and where the blood continues to serve *as blood*, not *as food* or “nourishment” in the human body. Further, not one of the three biblical books cited explicitly teaches or implies anything about uses of blood’s major “components” (red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma), as if they should under any circumstance be viewed differently from uses of blood’s “fractions.”

**[2]:** *The 2001 textbook Emergency Care, under “Composition of the Blood,” stated: “The blood is made up of several components: plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets.”*

Comment: The Society here quotes a textbook definition for “blood” which makes it plain that blood is “made up of several components,” namely, “plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets.” After noting this textbook’s definition, *The Watchtower* concludes:

**[3]:** *Thus, in line with medical facts, Witnesses refuse transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components.*

Comment: The only ‘fact’ from *The Watchtower*’s quote from *Emergency Care* is that blood is “made up of several components”! In stating this, the medical textbook is not claiming that any one of these four components of blood *is blood* or should be considered *as blood*. Indeed, the textbook’s definition shows that all four are necessary for “blood.” Thus, none of them are “blood” individually. So there is no ‘medical fact’ with which the Society is here “in line with” as it relates to its policy of refusing “transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components,” though this is the stated reason for why the Society quotes *Emergency Care*’s definition of “blood” in the first place!

The definition of “blood” from *Emergency Care*, quoted with approval by *The Watchtower*, actually supports the position of those who reject the Society’s view that these four components of blood should be viewed individually as “blood.” For this and for other related reasons on December 2, 2007, I wrote a letter to the Governing Body of those Jehovah’s Witnesses who are still associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. I asked about the Body’s blood policy, specifically as it relates to its quotation and use of the definition for “blood” from *Emergency*

*Care* in its June 15, 2004, issue. After quoting the relevant part of this *Watchtower* (quoted and evaluated on pages 583-584), I asked:

If you could, please, explain why f[r]actions of blood are a conscience matter whereas larger components of blood are not a conscience matter, when in fact neither blood's fractions nor blood's larger components are themselves blood from a medical perspective, this might help resolve some of the confusion over the current policy. Also, if you could please explain what "medical facts" you believe the current position is in line with as it relates to the above definition of blood, this would also be of great assistance. At the present time, I can only see that the above cited definition gives a listing of blood's components. I do not yet see how a presentation of the components of blood gives any support for a rejection of the components as if they are blood. But I am open to any explanation you may have to offer.<sup>52</sup>

The Governing Body has not responded to me directly or elsewhere that I can see, about any of these issues. At the same time, the Watchtower Society continues to let its members and its readers believe the "2001 textbook Emergency Care" provides "medical facts" with which the Society's blood policy of refusing "transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components" is "in line with." But this could only be true if the quoted textbook actually gives "medical facts" with which the Society's position in 'refusing transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components' is "in line with." It does not.

Simply quoting a medical textbook's definition for "blood" showing that blood has four primary components (from which components blood fractions are then derived) does not provide any "medical facts" which support the Society's view that these

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from Greg Stafford to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses dated December 2, 2007. A copy of this letter and of other letters I have sent to the Governing Body on the subject of the use of blood are available online as an addendum to my answer to the question, "What is your position on the use of blood, and how will this be presented in Jehovah Witnesses Defended, Third Edition?" in "*Upon the Lampstand*" (February 20, 2007 [rev. May 3, 2008]), pages 1-7, available through the Elihu Books web site ([www.elihubooks.com](http://www.elihubooks.com)). The Governing Body has not responded to any of my letters sent to them on this subject, which letters are dated February 25, 2007, August 15, 2007, and December 2, 2007.

components should be rejected as blood.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the Society not only misapplies the textbook's definition as support for its own unique view of blood's components, but it does so using a definition which itself contradicts the Society's view of blood's four primary components! The definition for blood quoted by *The Watchtower* clearly shows us that the four components of blood are *not* blood individually, since blood is "made up of" *all* four primary components.

Thus, the Society has not put forth any medical, scientific, or biblical good reasons for viewing blood's components as if any one of them are or should be considered *as blood*. There are also no good reasons to associate the Bible's command not to eat blood *as food* with medical transfusions of blood or of blood's four primary components, none of which are transfused *as food*.

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<sup>53</sup> Components of blood are not blood, just as hemoglobin (which the Society no longer prohibits) is not "blood," though it is also a substance that is derived from blood. In treating blood's four primary components as if they are "blood," the Watchtower Society's blood policy contains a logical fallacy known as the "fallacy of division." This fallacy in reasoning occurs "when the conclusion of an argument depends on the erroneous transference of an attribute from a whole (or a class) onto its parts (or members)" (Patrick J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 5th ed. [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994], page 166). Hurley gives the following example on the same page:

Salt is a nonpoisonous compound.

Therefore, its component elements, sodium and chlorine, are nonpoisonous.

The above fallacy in reasoning is similar to the Society's argument in relation to blood and to its four components. What may be true of the whole of "salt" is not necessarily true of its component parts. In the above example what is claimed to be true of salt (it is non-poisonous) is not true of its parts, since salt can be taken harmlessly into the body in certain amounts while its component elements when ingested or exposed to other elements can be very dangerous. Though there can be pieces or parts of larger wholes which are essentially the same as the whole of which they are parts (such as a broken piece of writing chalk [both the original whole piece and the broken part are "chalk"]), the same is not true for blood and for its components. In spite of the fact that blood has "pieces" or components which are *not* the same as the whole of which they are parts, the Society transfers "an attribute from a whole [that is, 'blood'] ... onto its parts [red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma]." *The Watchtower* also implies that the 2001 textbook *Emergency Care* which it quotes agrees with this fallacious transfer of attributes from the whole of "blood" to its component parts! Today the Society's fallacious transfer of attributes of blood to its parts applies only to the four primary components of blood, though at one time the Society extended its fallacious transfer of blood's attributes to "anything that is derived from blood and used to sustain life or strengthen one" ("Carry Your Own Load of Responsibility," *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1963, page 124 [quoted more fully in note 45]).

Further, what the Society has put forth from among the available medical textbooks contradicts the Society's view of blood's four primary components.

Rather than provide a basis for refusing proper medical treatment which does not involve the use of blood *as food*, the OT and the NT prohibitions concerning the use of blood have to do with *eating* blood and of *eating* 'flesh with its blood' *as food*. Consider how these prohibitions are presented in the NT book of Acts, and how they are linked to what is taught in the OT (with underlining added):

**Acts 15:13, 19-21, 22, 23, 28-29; 21:25**

After they quit speaking, James answered, saying: "... Hence my decision is not to trouble those from the nations who are turning to God, but to write them to abstain [Greek: form of *apecho*] 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." Then the apostles and the older men together with the whole congregation ... by their hand they wrote ... "For the holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to YOU, except these necessary things, to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. If YOU carefully keep yourselves from these things, YOU will prosper. Good health to YOU! ... As for the believers from among the nations, we have sent out, rendering our decision that they should keep themselves [Greek: form of *phylasso*, meaning 'to guard against' or 'beware'] from what is sacrificed to idols as well as from blood and what is strangled and from fornication.

In the Second Edition of my book, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics* (2000), I added a chapter called "Blood and the Bible." In that chapter I examined the words of the above quoted NT texts which contain what is known as the "Apostolic Decree." I focused in particular on the meaning of the words, "abstain ... from blood," as they relate to the teachings of the Watchtower Society. At the time, I felt it was my obligation to 'give a reason' for my beliefs about the use of

whole blood, which beliefs I had learned through association with the Watchtower Society (1 Peter 3:15). In 1999/2000 my beliefs concerning the use of blood were consistent with the Watchtower Society, though I did not yet have a complete understanding of all of the issues involved with the Society's view of blood's components and of fractions of those components. So I left out questions having to do with anything other than with what is actually presented in the Bible, namely, with "blood."

Where it concerned the use of whole blood, having grown up in and around the Watchtower Society in 1999/2000 I believed there was good "reason to be cautious about taking blood into our system in any form."<sup>54</sup> During this time, I also believed "the Bible's command to 'abstain from blood' [could] rightly be understood as covering all forms of taking blood into one's system."<sup>55</sup> My reasoning was as follows:

In reading the command to "abstain ... from blood" it is clear that something is missing: a verb. The Decree does not come right out and say, "abstain from drinking or eating blood." Yet, a verb of some kind is needed to complete the thought. ... In the context of the Apostolic Decree, which no doubt builds on the prohibition against eating and drinking blood in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is clear that either or both of these two verbs (eating and drinking) should be understood, especially since these were the only two known methods of taking blood into one's body in the ancient world ... It is of interest to note that although James does draw from the Law of Moses which specifically mentions the "eating" of blood, he himself does not say to abstain from *eating* blood, but, simply, to "abstain from blood." He makes no qualification, and does not limit it to "eating" or "drinking," as if for food.<sup>56</sup>

While the above represents part of my reasoning concerning uses of blood, what I did not fully understand, properly defend, or duly emphasize in the Second Edition of this book is the position held by many *other* Jehovah's Witnesses who disagreed both with me and with the Watchtower Society. Though I knew I had

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<sup>54</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, Second Edition, page 445.

<sup>55</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, Second Edition, page 428.

<sup>56</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, Second Edition, pages 433, 441.

left the area of blood components and blood fractions open for future discussion, this part of the issue became more and more pressing. As I started to look closer at the Society's entire blood policy, it became increasingly clear to me that there was much more involved with the Society's teachings on the use of blood than what most members of the Society likely realize.

Further complicating matters is that there are several biblical prohibitions concerning the use of blood but which are presented without verbs used explicitly in defining the prohibited use(s). Thus, some texts might be more easily misunderstood than others. But for good reasons which I came to learn from others and through my own study of the Bible and Watchtower and other literature, I wrote the following nearly two years after my earlier position:

Since the Bible really only speaks definitively about eating and drinking blood, "any other means" by which blood could be used would have to be evaluated in its own right. Whether or not whole blood transfusions or the use of blood for the derivation of its component or fractioned parts come under the biblical prohibition against eating and drinking blood is unclear. ... It may be that God *did* intend for humans to 'abstain from transfusing their own blood or that of another human or animal,' and elsewhere I have argued that those who take such a stand are not without any biblical basis. However, such a position cannot be *proven* since what is said in the Bible is limited to the eating and drinking of blood, the only two known forms of taking blood into one's body in the ancient world. Additionally, there were not any proven or otherwise reliable medical means by which a person could, in a religious or non-religious context, believe that eating or drinking another's blood would give them any real extension to his or her life. Finally, when you consider the basis upon which certain fractions are accepted whereas the four "major" components are ruled out, it becomes even more difficult for the individual Witness to decide what is soundly based on God's Word. ... Christians are more than willing to live and die in obedience to God, but no one should be pressured into



risking his or her life for something that lacks explicit biblical support.<sup>57</sup>

What I recognized in researching *Three Dissertations* was the other side of the same coin I had been looking at when I wrote the Second Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*. The "coin" is (in this case) the Bible, specifically the Decree to "abstain ... from blood." The other side of this "coin" is how one understands the prohibited *use*. Since the Watchtower Society permits withdrawing, storing, testing, and even fractionating of a person's blood, the Society itself does *not* "abstain ... from [all uses of] blood." But what is/are the prohibited use(s) of blood according to the Apostolic Decree, as represented by the NT book of Acts?

First, consider how the Apostolic Decree similarly teaches us to "abstain [or 'keep abstaining'] from ... things strangled." As with "blood," there is no use verb to tell us what *not* to do with "things strangled." But I do not know anyone who would cite this as a basis for prohibiting the use "things strangled" for clothing or for tools. Rather, the context shows us that the prohibition should be associated with what is "read aloud in the synagogues on every sabbath" from "Moses" (Acts 15:21). In the law of Moses "things strangled" can be further discerned from what is said in Leviticus 17:13, "As for any man of the sons of Israel or some alien resident who is residing as an alien in your midst who in hunting catches a wild beast or a fowl that may be eaten, he must in that case pour its blood out and cover it with dust." In other words, as is also noted in the NWT Reference Bible (1984) footnote to Acts 15:20, "things strangled" are animals "killed without draining [their] blood."

Similarly, then, we should use the law of Moses and other historical information from the Bible when evaluating what use(s) of "blood" are prohibited by what is recorded in Acts 15:20, 29, and 21:25. Like "things strangled," the noun "blood" requires either an explicit or an implied "use" verb to understand the prohibition, clearly. If the prohibited use is implied, then it can be discerned through the context in which the noun is used. In this case, the OT prohibits the "eating" of "blood" either alone

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<sup>57</sup> *Three Dissertations*, pages 193, 194-195, 196.

or with “flesh,” *as food* (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11-13; but compare Deuteronomy 14:21; see also Mark 7:19). But without such contextual associations clear in mind neither “blood” nor “things strangled” (both nouns) contain an inherent verbal idea, such as “eating.” By contrast, a verbal idea *is* present in the noun “fornication” (also prohibited by the Decree), namely, sex outside of marriage. Thus, there is no further need to isolate a “use” that is prohibited by “abstain ... from fornication.”

The same is not true for the items prohibited by the Decree, namely, “things polluted by idols,” “things strangled,” and “blood.” For these, the context associates prohibited uses with the law of “Moses.” If we do the same thing, it is easier to see what uses of blood are likely prohibited by the Apostolic Decree in Acts, since the prohibited uses are associated with what was “read aloud in the synagogues on every sabbath” from “Moses” (Acts 15:21). This is how I as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, as a Christian Witness of the biblical God Jah, view the teaching of the Apostolic Decree, that is, according to the good reasons found in the Bible itself.

Today, however, the laws of “Moses” and other OT prohibitions concerning the eating of blood are not regularly “read aloud.” Thus, as a Christian Witness of Jah I also believe for good reasons that any such eating, even of blood, is between each of and Jah God (Romans 14:4-8, 12). Indeed, Jesus himself taught us that God may choose to accept some who eat what Jah otherwise told his people not to eat, for even David ate “was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him,” and yet Jah preferred “mercy” rather than “sacrifice” (Matthew 12:1-7). So, too, should his Witnesses.

Christians come together to help each other and to praise Jah by looking to Jesus for how to live. We do not make it our business to pursue the medical, health, or dietary needs and interests of others (compare 1 Thessalonians 4:11). For Christian Witnesses of Jah and others who are moving on from association with the Watchtower Society because of its unbiblical traditions, the less we concern ourselves with what others do outside of praising Jah and treating others as we would ourselves, the more likely it is that we, too, will not be condemned.—Matthew 7:1; 23:34-40; James 2:13.