

Russell was familiar with the Scriptures quoted by the Watchtower Society to prohibit blood transfusions. Russell did not identify any connection between Bible verses in Leviticus and Acts that speak of eating blood and the act of transfusing blood medically. He appeared to believe that the reason that Christians would want to abstain from eating blood was so that Jewish brethren and possible converts would not be offended. From the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Apostolic Council,” Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence, November 15, 1892, 1473, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1892%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Verses 19, 20. ‘Wherefore,’ said he, ‘my judgment is that we should not trouble them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God’—they are justified by faith in Christ, and have already received the spirit of adoption, in uncircumcision, thus showing that faith in Christ the Redeemer is the only requisite to salvation. He further suggested writing to them merely that they abstain from pollutions of idols, i. e., from meats offered to idols (verse 29), and from things strangled and from blood—as by eating such things they might become stumbling blocks to their Jewish brethren (See 1 Cor. 8:4-13)—and from fornication. The eating of blood was forbidden, not only by the Jewish Law, but also before the Law was given. The same command was given to Noah. see Deut. 12:23; Gen. 9:4.”

The organization itself initially did not find transfusing blood to be an issue. In 1931, an article in Golden Age undercut the current argument used to condemn transfusions. The argument was straightforward. The Watchtower Society equates a transfusion with eating blood. Their claim is that placing nutrients directly into the bloodstream is still like eating. The article in 1931 stated that it was not the eating of blood that was the problem, but the bringing the blood of an animal in contact with a human. This argument may have been developed to discourage vaccinations, but it runs counter to the current arguments against blood transfusions. This from Charles A. Pattillo, “The Sacredness of Blood,” Golden Age, February 4, 1931, 294, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1931%20Golden.Age%20Num295-Num320.pdf>. “All reasonable minds must conclude that it was not the eating of the blood that God objected to, but it was bringing the blood of the beast in contact with the blood of man.”

There was however an anti-vaccination wing within the group and they also became opposed to blood transfusions. They pushed for a couple of decades to have the Watchtower take a position against blood transfusions. In 1945 the article “One Reason for God’s Vengeance” from a 1927 Watchtower resurfaced and the use of blood and blood products was declared to be pagan and immoral. Transfusions were effectively banned. This information is found in Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Immovable for the Right Worship,” Watchtower, July 1, 1945, 198-201, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1945%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Jehovah’s worshipers are cautious to avoid all blood-guilt. As long ago as December 15, 1927, an article appeared in this magazine entitled ‘One Reason for God’s Vengeance,’ and it called attention to the gross violation by the nations of Jehovah’s everlasting covenant. . . . They reasoned that as the blood is the principal medium by which the body is nourished, transfusion, therefore, is a quicker and shorter road to feed an ill-nourished body than eating food that turns to blood after

several changes. So transfusion was thought of not only as a cure, but also as a rejuvenator.” Hence, a blood transfusion is the same as eating blood. Food changes to blood after several changes according to the Watchtower.

The founder of the Watchtower did not understand that blood transfusions were an issue. The organization itself commended the donation of blood right up until 1945. For more than fifty years the deep truth that blood transfusions were bad was not appreciated. Therefore, it seems unavoidably true that the Scriptures do not clearly ban blood transfusions or organ transplants. It was an arbitrary decision. Since this decision has harmed and led to the death of many, many Jehovah’s witnesses it is indefensible and evil.