the patient, physicians might prescribe red
cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Trans-
fusing these major components allows a sin-
gle unit of blood to be divided among more
patients. Jehovah's Witnesses hold that ac-
cepting whole blood or any of those four pri-
mary components violates God's law. Signifi-
cantly, keeping to this Bible-based position
has protected them from many risks, includ-
ing such diseases as hepatitis and AIDS that
can be contracted from blood.

However, since blood can be processed be-
yond those primary components, questions
arise about fractions derived from the primary
blood components. How are such fractions
used, and what should a Christian consider
when deciding on them?

Blood is complex. Even the plasma—which
is 90 percent water—carries scores of hor-
mones, inorganic salts, enzymes, and nu-
trients, including minerals and sugar. Plasma
also carries such proteins as albumin, clotting
factors, and antibodies to fight diseases. Tech-
nicians isolate and use many plasma proteins.
For example, clotting factor VIII has been given
to hemophiliacs, who bleed easily. Or
if someone is exposed to certain diseases,
doctors might prescribe injections of gamma
globulin, extracted from the blood plasma
of people who already had immunity. Other
plasma proteins are used medically, but
the above mentioned illustrate how a pri-
mary blood component (plasma) may be pro-
cessed to obtain fractions.*

Just as blood plasma can be a source of vari-
cious fractions, the other primary compo-
nents (red cells, white cells, platelets) can be
processed to isolate smaller parts. For example,
white blood cells may be a source of interfer-
on and interleukins, used to treat some vi-
rnal infections and cancers. Platelets can be
processed to extract a wound-healing factor.
And other medicines are coming along that
involve (at least initially) extracts from blood
components. Such therapies are not transfu-
sions of those primary components; they usu-
ally involve parts or fractions thereof. Should
Christians accept these fractions in medical
treatment? We cannot say. The Bible does not
give details, so a Christian must make his own
conscientious decision before God.

Some would refuse anything derived from
blood (even fractions intended to provide
temporary passive immunity). That is how
they understand God's command to 'abstain
from blood.' They reason that his law to Israel
required that blood removed from a creature
be 'poured out on the ground.' (Deuterono-
my 12:22-24) Why is that relevant? Well, to
prepare gamma globulin, blood-based clot-
ting factors, and so on, requires that blood be
collected and processed. Hence, some Chris-
tians reject such products, just as they reject
transfusions of whole blood or of its four pri-
mary components. Their sincere, conscien-
tious stand should be respected.

Other Christians decide differently. They
too refuse transfusions of whole blood, red
cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Yet, they
might allow a physician to treat them with
a fraction extracted from the primary com-
ponents. Even here there may be differences.
One Christian may accept a gamma globulin
injection, but he may or may not agree to
an injection containing something extracted
from red or white cells. Overall, though, what
might lead some Christians to conclude that
they could accept blood fractions?

"Questions From Readers" in The Watch-
tower of June 1, 1990, noted that plasma pro-
teins (fractions) move from a pregnant wom-
an's blood to the separate blood system of her
fetus. Thus a mother passes immunoglobulins
to her child, providing valuable immunity.
Separately, as a fetus' red cells complete their
normal life span, their oxygen-carrying por-

tion is processed by the mother's liver, which
is destroyed and is eliminated. Jehovah's
Witnesses note that these portions can pass
in a general setting, but are derived from blood.

Does the present decision, which is the con-
tsious decision of both whole blood and its
components, affect mine? The blood of both
is also derived from the same source: from
blood.

*SUGGESTIONS

If you have a health
volve a doctor.

Do ask if blood is
that, as we do not
no blood. If whole
white cells, plate-
to me understand.

If any blood or
from blood, plate-
lets, ask me.

Has this problem
four primary
you express?

How do you
might be?

If my health
this fraction
there?

If my health
this fraction
be used?

After these further

tions.
SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR

If you face surgery or a treatment that might involve a blood product, ask:

Do all the medical personnel involved know that, as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, I direct that no blood transfusions (whole blood, red cells, white cells, platelets, or blood plasma) be given to me under any circumstances?

If any medicine to be prescribed may be made from blood plasma, red or white cells, or platelets, ask:

Has the medicine been made from one of the four primary blood components? If so, would you explain its makeup?

How much of this blood-derived medicine might be administered, and in what way?

If my conscience permits me to accept this fraction, what medical risks are there?

If my conscience moves me to decline this fraction, what other therapy might be used?

After I have considered this matter further, when may I inform you of my decision?

Beyond that, when it comes to fractions of any of the primary components, each Christian, after careful and prayerful meditation, must conscientiously decide for himself.

Many people would be willing to accept any therapy that seems to offer immediate benefit, even a therapy having known health risks, as is true of blood products. The sincere Christian endeavors to have a broader, more balanced view that involves more than just the physical aspects. Jehovah’s Witnesses appreciate efforts to provide quality medical care, and they weigh the risk/benefit ratio of any treatment. However, when it comes to products derived from blood, they carefully weigh what God says and their personal relationship with our Life-Giver.—Psalm 36:9.

What a blessing for a Christian to have such confidence as the psalmist who wrote: “Jehovah God is a sun and a shield; favor and glory are what he gives. Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness. O Jehovah . . . , happy is the man that is trusting in you!”—Psalm 84:11, 12.