

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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SDS:SSP September 25, 1999

Dear Brother

Please accept our apologies for the unusually long delay in responding to your letter dated May 7, 1999, in which you inquire about the situation involving your father, Daniel Fitzwater. We have given consideration to your questions and are pleased to make the following observations.

We are pleased to note your statement that you believe in Jehovah. Your concern with how he views us, which you expressed, is most appropriate. In some situations humans are not able to establish a matter with accuracy, but we know that Jehovah sees all, We are given this assurance at Hebrews 4:13 where it says., "And there is not a creation that is not manifest to his sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting." This accounting with God is something that all of us, including your father, will have to make.

As we are sure you realize, because of the need for maintaining confidentiality on matters of this nature, we cannot comment on the details of any specific case, including your father's. However, we are pleased to try to address some of your questions that deal with the general procedures in handling cases in which an individual is accused of wrongdoing. First, let us assure you that you are in error on the point you made in the third paragraph of your letter. The Society does feel that your concerns are important to us, and we have given very careful attention to what you have written.

We noted in the penultimate paragraph of your letter you say-, "The fact that I personally know of none of the allegations first hand does not diminish the fact that in my opinion, I believe my father molested my stepsister Dawn." We certainly appreciate that your belief in this matter is sincere and very strong. Nevertheless, in following Scriptural procedures, the congregation can only take judicial action on the eyewitness evidence of two or more individuals, or confession. So, while we may have some strong convictions on a certain situation, without this Scriptural evidence the elders are not able to take judicial action. This in no way implies that they do not believe the one bringing them the information, but as you said in your letter it is how Jehovah sees things that is important. Since this is God's direction to those examining cases of wrongdoing, the elders must abide by the Scriptures. -Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 1 Timothy 5:19.

Some matters are firmly established by sufficient evidence or by confession, or both. However, what is the situation when an individual in these cases appears to the elders handling matters to be demonstrating heartfelt repentance? In that case the elders would reprove such a

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man, as Titus said "with severity". (Titus 1:13) The decision to reprove or disfellowship, the individual is left in the hands of the elders of each congregation. It is up to them to weigh all the accusations, and all claims of repentance. In the case of Titus, you will notice the reason that the apostle Paul left him in Crete: "That you might make appointments of older men in city after city, as I gave you orders." (Titus 1:5) These older men had a responsibility to handle matters in the congregation, in the same way as the "older men" in ancient Israel would have cared for matters of this nature.

So, Brother Fitzwater, while we realize that we are dealing with imperfect men, we can have confidence that Jehovah is watching all things. if by cunning or pretense someone is able to fool men, even men appointed in the congregation, they could not fool Jehovah. In the final analysis it is to him that we all have an accounting. As the apostle Paul said at Romans 14: 10:12: "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

As you pray for strength from Jehovah to endure in this very trying "time of the end", please act in harmony with your prayers. Do not neglect your spiritual health by missing meetings, or neglecting your personal study and Bible reading. Be assured that all of us are deeply concerned for your spiritual well-being, and more importantly that Jehovah cares for you.

With this letter, please accept a warm expression of Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

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