Christian Congregation
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ECB:ECZ September 1, 2006

JAYNE WILLIAMS
[redacted]
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Sister Williams:

We are pleased to respond to your letter of July 12, 2006, wherein you ask for clarification regarding our understanding of the "seven thunders" and the "little scroll" mentioned at Revelation 10:1-4. You raise this question since page 252 of *"Then Is Finished the Mystery of God"* states: "In course of time *The Finished Mystery* proved to be unsatisfactory, because it had been written and published before many critical parts of the book of Revelation were fulfilled to make possible a correct understanding. So, although an attempt was made to write down things heard, *The Finished Mystery* did not break the secret of any 'seven thunders' that had 'uttered their own voices.' (Revelation 10:3) It was therefore a time to wait for accurate understanding to be made possible, and in the meanwhile to absorb spiritual knowledge from the hand of Jehovah God by means of his glorified Son Jesus Christ."

You are to be commended for wanting a clearer understanding of this matter. What is quoted above regarding *The Finished Mystery* book, published in 1917, is not specifically saying that the book was unsatisfactory in its explanation of Revelation 10:1-3, but rather it was inadequate in explaining various parts of the entire Bible book of Revelation, "because it had been written and published before many critical parts of the book of Revelation were fulfilled to make possible a correct understanding." In Jehovah's due time, however, a better understanding of the entire book of Revelation would be granted. Interestingly, unlike in *The Finished Mystery*, the book *"Then Is Finished the Mystery of God,"* published in 1969, provided a Scriptural explanation of what was represented by the "seven thunders" and other features of the prophecy recorded at Revelation chapter 10.—See pages 251 to 252, paragraph 10.

In more recent years, further insight has been gained into the Bible book of Revelation, including what is recorded in chapter 10. Hence, page 157 of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* states that "the 'voices of the seven thunders' are Jehovah's own expression of his purposes," the number seven representing the completeness of this expression. (Verse 3) Too, page 158 mentions that "the opened scroll that the glorified Jesus Christ gives to John is likewise a divine message. John is to preach regarding 'peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.' To feed upon this scroll is sweet for him because it is from a divine source." (Verses 2, 8-10) Yet, as stated on page 158, paragraph 17 of the *Revelation Climax* book, it is important to "remember, John is here actually participating in the prophetic vision. What he records is, in fact, a prophecy to be fulfilled after 1914, when the strong angel takes up his position astride the earth and the sea." As further shown on pages 159 and 160, what occurred with the apostle John in vision, as recorded at Revelation 10, portrays the similar experience of the anointed "in the Lord's day" whom John represented. (Revelation 1:10) As stated on page 19, paragraph 16, of the October 15, 1988, issue of *The Watchtower:* "Back in 1919, when anointed Christians figuratively ate the little scroll, it was not time for them to have a complete understanding of Jehovah's purposes. (Compare Daniel 12:8, 9.) But they fearlessly forged ahead with what understanding they had and proved themselves worthy of further enlightenment."

Similar to the above explanation, page 19, paragraph 13, of the December 15, 1983, issue of *The Watchtower* states regarding the anointed remnant since 1914: "This remnant was prefigured by John, the writer of the last book of the Bible canon, Revelation. In the first postwar year of 1919 this remnant had an experience like that which John describes respecting himself in Revelation chapter 10. This experience was to occur near the time when 'the mystery of God,' or his 'sacred secret,' was to be brought to a finish. (Revelation 10:7, *Authorized Version, NW*) After they got spiritual refreshment, as it were, by eating the sweet-tasting 'little scroll' that was held out to them, those who made up this modern class prefigured by John were, in effect, told: 'You must prophesy again with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.'—Revelation 10:10, 11." Obediently, the anointed remnant and their companions with an earthly hope have declared God's message to mankind, which includes his purposes as foretold in the thrilling Bible book of Revelation.

We trust the above comments will be helpful to you. We send our warm love and Christian greetings.

Your brothers in Jehovah's service,

Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses

JEHOVAH BRINGS 'SEALING' OF HIS CHOSEN ONES TO A CLOSE

THE apostle Paul wrote to his spirit-begotten brothers: "The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together."—Rom. 8:16, 17.

How is this 'bearing witness' done? "Our spirit," that is, the dominant attitude of these spirit-begotten Christians, is molded by God's holy spirit so that they come to know what relationship with God they have. But it is not done in some altogether mysterious way. God's Word, his dealing with the Christian congregation, the "food at the proper time" through the "faithful and discreet slave," the enlightenment that our brothers help us to get and the clear view of God's purposes along with the fulfillment of prophecy, all unite with the operation of God's holy spirit, in this 'bearing witness.'

THE FINAL 'SEALING'

One of the Bible passages bearing on God's activity toward his anointed ones on earth at this time is Revelation 7:1-8. There, the angels holding back the destructive winds of the "great tribulation" are told not to loose them until the 144,000 spiritual Israelites are "sealed" in their foreheads. (Matt. 24:21) What is this 'sealing'? Some have understood it to mean that, during the spiritual "harvest," which is "the conclusion of the system of things," the selection of spiritual brothers of the Messiah Jesus will go on until the last year, day, hour and minute before the "four winds" begin to blow on the earth. Is this the correct understanding? No. Why not?—Matt. 13:39, 40.

Well, the 'sealing' here referred to does not mean the initial sealing of the 144,000, as if all of these, particularly all those yet remaining on earth, had not yet been sealed. The apostle Paul shows that this initial sealing takes place at the time of selection of an individual for the heavenly inheritance. He says to his spiritual brothers: "By means of [Christ] also, after you believed, *you were sealed* with the promised holy spirit."—Eph. 1:13.

Some of the 'remnant,' therefore, were sealed in this initial sense before the angel was sent forth with the "seal of the living God." The sealing that the angel does is a *final* sealing, a determination of the *permanence* of the initial sealing, so that "all [spiritual] Israel" is saved, the complete number of the 144,000 making the calling and choosing of themselves sure. (Rom. 11:26; 2 Pet. 1:10) Nearly all of these, if not all, were already sealed many years ago with the initial sealing. While it is true that some, before the sealing is permanent, may prove unfaithful and so others have to be sealed, there is no general ingathering of disciples being initially sealed at this late date. If those spiritual Israelites are to prove themselves true to God's purpose for them, it is unlikely that God would initially seal new ones of this body of heavenly heirs at the 'last minute.'

SELF-EXAMINATION

How can you personally examine yourself if this matter is a question in your mind?

First, you should examine your view of what it means to be sealed for the heavenly inheritance. Do you view being one of God's anointed spiritual Israelites as giving special status in the Christian congregation, entitling you to greater respect than would be the case if you were one of the "great crowd" of those awaiting an earthly inheritance? Do you feel it will give you deeper knowledge? Do you believe you will receive special revelations or understanding of prophecies, and so forth? You may feel a keen desire to enjoy such things. Perhaps you are successful in placing Bible literature, in conducting Bible studies, in answering Bible questions, in giving Bible talks. You may be full of zeal, making rapid progress, living an exemplary theocratic life. Perhaps all of this is so. Yet these would not be the things on which one should build the idea that one is qualified for the heavenly Kingdom assignment. Why not? Because both anointed spiritual Israelites and "other sheep" have God's favor, and both must live lives in harmony with God's will.

Samson and many other persons in pre-Pentecostal days were filled with zeal and understanding. God's spirit was upon them and, as a result, they were able to accomplish many supernatural feats. Yet none of such "so great a cloud" of faithful ones were of the heavenly class.—Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14; compare Exodus 35:30, 31; 1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13; Ezekiel 2:2; Hebrews 11:32-38; 12:1.

Then you might review your background and characteristics. Are you taking an emotional approach to the question? One who was in a false religion that held out heaven as the only hope—particularly one of the more emotional "fundamentalist" religions—may be swayed by emotion and past views. Have you, before coming to a knowledge of the truth, used narcotics or psychedelic drugs? Have you been on medication that affects the mind and emotions? Have you had to undergo psychiatric treatment for emotional or mental disturbances? While these things would not necessarily rule out the receiving of the heavenly call, in the case of a repentant, converted, baptized disciple they are factors that should be seriously considered.

Some have said that they undergo great inward disturbances, a few even saying that their receiving of the heavenly hope created within them a 'real fight.' Some have said that they first fought against it. Others, that for a while they lost all hope—that God had taken away their erstwhile earthly hope for a while and then finally had given them the heavenly hope. Such a procedure would be contrary to God's way of dealing, for one cannot serve God pleasingly without hope of reward. (Heb. 11:6) There is no uncertainty about this. Faith is not uncertain, but confident, convinced.

AN ILLUSTRATION

A simple illustration may help: Biologists say that what determines the sex of a child is the microscopic difference of one of the forty-six chromosomes in the fertilized egg. This egg or ovum, fertilized by the male sperm cell, contains twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. One pair determines sex. This pair can be composed of two "x" chromosomes or of an "x" and a "y" chromosome (the "y" chromosome being shorter). If the cell contains two "x" chromosomes, the child is a girl; if an "x" and a "y" chromosome, the child is a boy. This very minute difference triggers, in the growth of the child, all the

vast differences that result between the male and female.

Now, we know that no one has to tell a normal person whether he or she is a man or a woman. This difference, created and arranged by Jehovah, at first extremely small, results in the wide difference in makeup of the man and the woman. The man's heart and mind tend toward masculine things, such as mechanics, construction, and so forth; while the woman loves to dwell on feminine desires, such as home, clothing, decoration and the like. Neither can fully explain to the other his or her exact thinking, reasoning and feeling about matters. It is of God.

Similarly with the spirit-begotten "little flock" and the "other sheep." The apostle Peter says to his spirit-begotten brothers: "You have been given a new birth, not by corruptible, but by incorruptible reproductive seed, through the word of the living and enduring God." (1 Pet. 1:23) If God can, by the difference of one microscopic chromosome, bring about an amazingly different way of thinking and desire, just as surely he can impart the heavenly hope, way of thinking, desire and goal or drive to those whom he selects according to his will. By his spirit and Word he can implant that "seed" that makes the individual a "new creation," with corresponding heavenly hopes. (2 Cor. 5:17) Even in a human body God places the members according to what he sees the body needs.—1 Cor. 12:18.

Consequently, those of the anointed Kingdom heirs are happy that they are chosen for so great a service and reward, just as a normal man is glad that he is a man and as a woman is glad that she is a woman. Each person is what God made him. The man or the woman does not have to be encouraged to 'find his or her place' among the sexes. It is God-ordained and cannot be changed, nor does the individual need anyone else to determine what he or she is.—Rom. 9:16.

Accordingly, it is not necessary, or good, when studying or talking with persons new in knowledge of the Bible truth, to suggest they should personally try to decide or determine whether they are recipients of the heavenly 'calling' or have an earthly hope. If not called to the heavenly calling, they are obviously of the earthly class. If ever there is to be any change, this should be left to God to determine and to inform them in his due time.

At this time the dominant thrust of God's message is, not for people to be members of Christ's heavenly "bride." Rather, the Bible says: "The spirit and the *bride* keep on saying: 'Come!'" This invitation is now the call to people of the nations, to live in an earthly paradise through which "water of life" will freely flow, bringing forth trees producing symbolic fruitage and leafage "for the curing of the nations."—Rev. 22:1, 2, 17.

WHAT TRULY ANOINTED ONES WILL DO

What will those truly of the anointed spiritual Israelites now be doing? They will set themselves vigorously to caring for the Kingdom interests, ministering to the "other sheep." It would not be caring for the present Kingdom interests for those of the anointed class to separate themselves to have regular sessions to 'talk of their heavenly hope.' That which they discuss should be the things that upbuild and make for peace and unity in all the congregation. This will help the "other sheep" and will help the anointed ones themselves equally. Thus both classes will make up "one flock." (John 10:16) The spiritual "food at the proper time" is what is to be feasted upon by all alike. This food will nourish the inner hope of both the anointed sealed ones and the "other sheep." —Matt. 24:45-47.

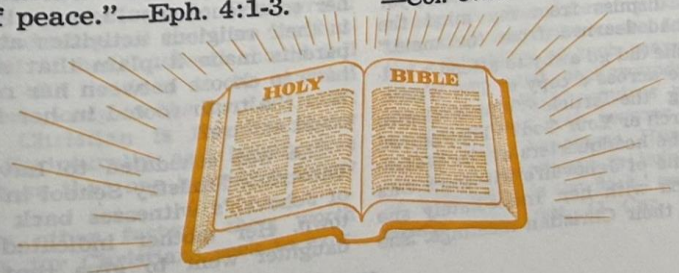
This point about separation is mentioned because, in some instances, persons professing to be newly anointed have tended to isolate themselves, or to form a separate group. This works toward disunity and has actually brought about division in the congregation in a number of cases. —Prov. 18:1.

Those who are called to the heavenly inheritance with Jesus Christ acknowledge, when asked about it, that they are indeed receivers of this calling. At the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal each year they demonstrate that they have this heavenly hope by partaking of the emblems served. But they do not constantly advertise this fact. They do not self-importantly call attention to it so as to keep everyone in the congregation continually aware of it. They do not expect preferential treatment. Rather, they are busy in the manner described by the apostle John: "Everyone who has this hope set upon him purifies himself just as that one is pure."—1 John 3:3.

At 2 Peter 1:5-11, this apostle points out how the spiritual brothers of Christ will be occupied, working to produce the fruits of the spirit "to make the calling and choosing of you sure for yourselves." This requires "lowliness of mind and mildness, with long-suffering, putting up with one another in love, earnestly endeavoring to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace."—Eph. 4:1-3.

As to elders and other members of the congregation, they should not try to determine the position of a recently baptized one who feels he or she has the heavenly calling. It is not for them to criticize such a one for the hope he claims to have. It is not something over which to argue. The requirements placed on an anointed one may be discussed to help the individual to get the clearest possible Scriptural picture. And the one professing to be of the anointed class should be appreciative of the attempts to assist him. But, after all is said and done, it is God who makes the selection and it is between the individual and God as to where he stands. Such persons should be treated as all others in the congregation should be, with love, understanding and cooperation as all 'work together with God and Christ.'—Col. 3:12-17; 2 Cor. 6:1.

At this late date in the outworking of Jehovah's purposes toward the Christian congregation, it is clear that the emphasis is not on the general call of disciples to the heavenly inheritance. The primary thing now is to serve God whole-souled, giving attention to our Christian integrity and the work of gathering the "other sheep." No one should let his personal feeling toward his own status or that of another create an issue in the congregation. It is essential in this strenuous "time of the end" for all to be united in love, which is the "perfect bond of union." —Col. 3:14.

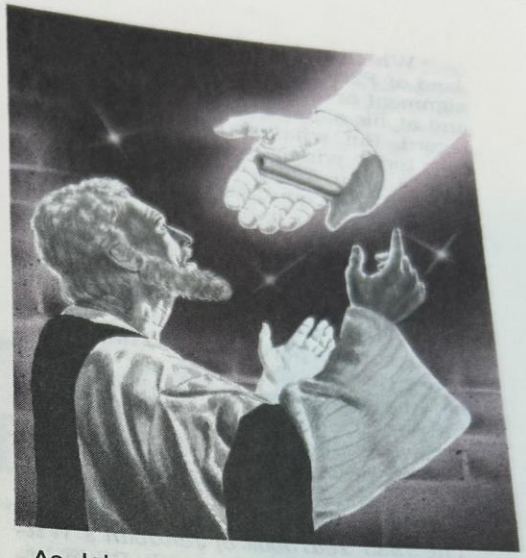


of pangs of distress. As for you, look out for yourselves; people will deliver you up to local courts, and you will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them. Also, in all the nations the good news has to be preached first. But when they are leading you along to deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what to speak; but whatever is given you [to speak] in that hour, speak this, for you are not the ones speaking, but the holy spirit is."—Mark 13:8-11.

12 World pangs of distress began in 1914. The foretold persecution of the faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ followed and continues down to this day. All the evidence indicates that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things," yes, nearing its grand climax in this nuclear age. (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3, 4) But before the complete end yet comes, "the good news" has to be "preached first." So this worldwide 'speaking the Word of God fearlessly' in behalf of the Kingdom is one of the most outstanding proofs that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things." —Matthew 24:14.

Eating God's Word and Speaking It Forth Worldwide

13 John, the last of the surviving disciples chosen by Jesus as an apostle, finished his earthly career near the end of the first century. During this "conclusion of the system of things" since 1914 there has been a remnant of dedicated, baptized Christians anointed with Jehovah's spirit. This remnant was prefigured by John, the writer of the last book of the Bible canon, Revelation. In the first postwar year of 1919 this remnant had an experience like that which John describes respecting himself in Revelation chapter 10. This experience was to occur near the time when "the mystery of God," or his "sacred secret," was to be brought to a finish. (Revelation 10:7, *Authorized Version, NW*) After they got spiritual refreshment, as it were, by eating the sweet-tasting "little scroll" that was held out to them, those who made up this modern class prefigured by John were, in effect, told: "You must prophesy again with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."—Revelation 10:10, 11.



As John received a symbolic scroll and a command to "prophesy again," so Christians today fearlessly declare God's message

12. Despite violent opposition, what was to be preached first, and of what was this to be a most outstanding sign?

13. What experience like that described in Revelation chapter 10 did the anointed remnant have after World War I, and after the refreshment was taken, what command was given?

1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7) Rather, the Lord's day will be a source of rich blessings for us.

Marvelous Privileges of Service

16 At Revelation 10:3, 4, John says that he heard "the seven thunders" utter their own voices. He wanted to write down what he had heard, but he reports: "I heard a voice out of heaven say: 'Seal up the things the seven thunders spoke, and do not write them down.'" Evidently, it was not yet time for such information to be released. Instead, John was told to take the little scroll and eat it. The seven thunders appear to represent a complete expression of Jehovah's purposes. (Psalm 29:3; John 12:28, 29; Revelation 4:5) Back in 1919, when anointed Christians figuratively ate the little scroll, it was not time for them to have a complete understanding of Jehovah's purposes. (Compare Daniel 12:8, 9.) But they fearlessly forged ahead with what understanding they had and proved themselves worthy of further enlightenment.

17 Then, over the years, they were given a progressively clearer understanding of Jehovah's will. For example, they came to realize that the sheep of Jesus' parable were, even before Armageddon, being separated from the goats. (Matthew 25: 31-46) They saw that the birth of the Kingdom in 1914 was in fulfillment of Revelation chapter 12. They came to a deeper appreciation of the importance of Jehovah's name, and they learned who the great crowd of Revelation chapter 7 really are. What confidence these progressive revelations gave to God's people!—Proverbs 4:18; 2 Peter 1:19.

18 At the same time, Jehovah entrusted his earthly servants with outstanding privileges of service. In a lofty vision, John saw angels proclaiming everlasting good news for mankind, proclaiming the fall of Babylon the Great, and warning against receiving the mark of the beast. (Revelation 14:6-10) While angels undoubtedly oversaw these divine service privileges, it was humans, Jehovah's Witnesses on earth, who actually spoke these messages to mankind. John also saw Jesus reaping "the harvest of the earth." (Revelation 14:14-16) But it has been through the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work of Jesus' subjects on earth that he has reaped this harvest. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) What a privilege it is to share with the angels and with Jesus Christ himself in service privileges of such vital importance! In so doing, we feel ourselves truly in harmony with Jehovah's great, invisible heavenly organization of faithful spirit creatures.

Divine Protection

19 As the end of his world approaches, Satan will put more and more pressure upon Christians. The climax of his hostility is described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, where he is prophetically called Gog of Magog. According to this inspired prophecy, Satan will make an all-out attack to try to destroy God's people once and for all. Will he succeed? Revelation answers: "The ten horns [modern-day "kings," or rulers] . . . will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of

16. Why was John told not to write down what the seven thunders said, and what did this mean for anointed Christians in 1919?

17. What are some of the new insights that Jehovah has granted to his people in the years since 1919?

18. What outstanding privileges of service have Jehovah's people shared in during the Lord's day, and what awareness does this build in our hearts?

19. (a) What will be the climax of Satan's hostility toward God's people? (b) Who will conquer in the final, climactic conflict?