



*Will God
"clear" this
"guilty"
world?*

JAMES R. CORAM

Concordant Publishing Concern

P.O. Box 449

Almont, Michigan 48003

WILL GOD "CLEAR" THIS "GUILTY" WORLD?

According to the "Bible," the world is *guilty* and God will by no means clear the guilty! At least this is the claim of the Authorized Version. Many ask us to believe that Paul went to great lengths to prove that the purpose of the law was to make all the world become *guilty* before God (Rom.3:9-19). It is also said by some that when Ieue* descended in a cloud and proclaimed His name before Moses that He then made it plain that even though He was "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" that these attributes will be of no benefit to the guilty, evidently, for He will "by no means clear *the guilty*" (Exod.34:6,7, A.V.).

Here is "conclusive Bible proof" that all the world is guilty and will not be cleared, the grace of God notwithstanding! Hence all is lost, the death of Christ as a sacrifice for the sake of the life of all mankind must have been in vain, and we might as well enjoy life while we can for this will be "all that there is"; therefore, "we may be eating and drinking, for tomorrow we are dying."

Lest our readers take us seriously here, perhaps it should be emphasized that we are by no means advocating such a course and are only speaking thus to show that our logical conclusion cannot be faulted if

*"Ieue" is a transliteration of the Hebrew Name of God, used in preference to the less accurate translation, "LORD," or the modified transliteration "Jehovah." The usual spellings (Yahweh or Jehovah) reflect the traditional vowel pointing. Ieue is pronounced "Yehweh" and means Will-be-ing-was. In Revelation 1:8 John seems to give the meaning of the Name for his Greek readers: Who is and Who was and Who is coming (cf 1:4; 4:8 and 11:17; 16:5 where the future is omitted).

God's verdict is "guilty" in regard to our sin and if He will absolutely not "clear" us of the charge. Such a claim may be in the "Bible," but thanks be to God, it is not in the Scriptures, and indeed they set forth the very opposite.

"GUILTY" CONTRADICTS CONTEXTUAL TRUTH

The rendering "guilty" in Romans 3:19 is very unfortunate. It should never have been so rendered and is not by any stretch of the imagination a translation of *hupodikos*. Rather, it is a crass and tragic paraphrase. The Greek *hupodikos* is UNDER-JUST according to its compound elements, and in Romans 3:19 is used to set forth the truth that even those who are under the law (the sons of Israel) must take their place before the bar of God along with the rest of the nations of the earth, "that every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may become *subject to the just verdict of God*"; that is, they must come *under His justice*. He will then do right and in *His righteousness*, "execute judgment" (Gen.18:25). To translate *hupodikos* as "guilty" contradicts the glorious declarations of faith which promptly follow where it is revealed that by means of the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, we are gratuitously justified in His grace; that is, God declares us to be righteous and thus we are vindicated or acquitted. To justify is to proclaim "*not guilty*"! This is the very opposite of what the scholars who have given us the King James Version claim in verse nineteen. While we appreciate their much more satisfactory, albeit contradictory, rendering of the verses that immediately follow, we are glad that all judging has been given to the Son (John 5:22) and kept out of the hands of men, especially those of the translators of the Authorized

Version who insist that we are guilty and cannot be cleared! For in many cases their renderings venenate (poison) the minds of men against the truth so as to cause them to venerate error and repudiate that which God has actually revealed.

God's righteousness according to truth, wherein He effectually declares His creatures "not guilty" by literally declaring them to be righteous in Christ's blood, is presently "on all who are believing" and it is to proceed "into all" humanity "*for there is no distinction, for all sinned* and are wanting of the glory of God" (Rom.3:21-24, cf 5:18,19). We should rejoice that even though those who do such evil things as we all have done are quite "*deserving of death*" (Rom. 1:32), after all have undergone the judgments which pertain to them, all will one day receive "life's justifying" through Jesus Christ, and actually become "constituted just," for our *God is the Saviour of all mankind* (Rom.5:18,19, 1 Tim.4:10).

"THE GUILTY" IS NOT IN THE HEBREW

Let us now investigate the rendering of Exodus 34:7 in the Authorized Version. The most shocking thing we notice at first glance is that the words "the guilty" are in italics! This means that even the translators acknowledge that such words are nowhere to be found in the Hebrew. It is incredible that men have gone around scaring one another with words to the effect that the "guilty" will have to suffer in "hell" "forever" when all such words have no place whatever in sound Biblical exposition. While we have extensively dealt with the latter two unsound expressions elsewhere and have just pointed out that the word "guilty" is not even in the roman typeface of the Authorized Version, we still need to grasp the

force of what *is* revealed in Exodus 34:7. To facilitate a clear appraisal of this enigmatic passage, we will set forth the following pertinent points one by one:

(1) As stated, "the guilty" is in italics in the A.V. and is not in the Hebrew text. Therefore, the words should be ignored.

(2) The Hebrew language does have a word for guilt (*ashm*), and if "guilty" had been intended, it certainly would have been used here.

(3) While some people may herein mean well, they should nonetheless refrain from such hackneyed sayings as "I was a guilty sinner," and instead simply acknowledge in a personal way what the Scriptures do set forth about the wickedness and depravity of man, and leave the verdict in God's hands, no matter how "guilty" their consciences may be.

(4) The Hebrew of "that will by no means clear" (A.V.) is: *nqe la inqe*, which is literally to-make-innocent NOT He-is-making-innocent.

(5) Notice in the above transliteration and literal translation that the *same word* is simply repeated, but in a different grammatical form and with the negative between. The A.V. renders this "clear" only four times; if other forms of the root are included, even they render it "innocent" about forty times.

(6) Its meaning is clearly established in the law of Moses. The owner of a goring ox shall be held *innocent* (A.V. "quit," Exod.21:28). But if the owner had been warned that the ox was dangerous and had not kept him in, he was not innocent, but liable to be put to death (*cf* Exod.21:18,19).

(7) Let us consider another case of a doubled verb where the second one is likewise varied in order to modify the idea. Genesis 2:17: "to die (infinitive)

you are dying” (the incomplete). In the day Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he certainly did not develop “spiritual death” as is claimed in fundamentalist fables. Neither did he “surely die” and return to the soil in the day that he ate thereof, as the Authorized Version has it, for he lived to be four hundred and thirty years of age (Gen.5:5). Rather he was promised that “in the day you eat from it, *to die* shall you be *dying*” (Gen.2:17, C.V.). That is, the death process, or *mortality*, began when Adam sinned, and in this way death entered into the world (through his sin); “and *thus* death passed through into all mankind *on which* all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Notice that the same basic structure is found in the literal renderings of both these excerpts (Gen. 2:17 and Exod.34:7, *cf* point #4).

(8) Many “translators” have interpreted rather than translated doubled verbs such as these, supposing that all that is intended by such a literary device of verbal repetition is mere *stress*, such as with the A.V. rendering “thou shalt *surely* die.” While such an *interpretation* is quite right in some cases, it would still be best to translate literally and to leave the judgment of whether or not such passages have more to state than mere verbal emphasis to the discretion of the thoughtful reader, rather than to make up his mind for him. Besides, repetition is not all that is involved in Exodus 34:7; rather we have in the second form a modification of the idea of the first form. And all such literary devices, when considered literally as well as figuratively, will give in their literal force the precise meaning according to the context, for God’s words are truly *pure expressions* of thought which yield pure complete thoughts when formed into sentences (Psa. 12:6, *cf* Prov.30:5,6).

(9) The Authorized Version's treatment of the verbal repetition in Genesis 2:17, as defective as it is, is better than its rendering of Exodus 34:7. This is because in the former passage when it states "thou shalt *surely die*," at least the added emphasis is placed upon the verb where it belongs. But in the latter when it is joined to the first word ("that") by rendering it "*that will by no means*," instead of putting the emphasis on the verb "clear," the A.V. even goes beyond the bounds of interpretative idiom. And thus the idea has been established in the minds of countless people that God's mercy and grace are not the actual *solution* to the plight of "guilty" sinners. For many this perverse rendering has altogether blacked out the *true grace* of the previous words.

(10) As we continue to gather helpful information concerning this passage, let us note that the Hebrew language has two forms or so-called "tenses" that do not live up to the names which some have assigned to them. For the so-called "past" often refers to the future, and the so-called "future" often refers to the past. Protracted analyses of the Hebrew vocabulary and grammar by such thorough investigators as A.E. Knoch and E.H. Clayton, the principal workers on the *Concordant Version** of the Hebrew Scriptures, have established consistent standards for these verb forms that give us some very helpful information. They found that the so-called "past" actually expresses a *fact* and the so-called "future" a *process*. For example, in Genesis 2:17, "to die" is a fact, and "you are dying" is a process (of dissolution).

(11) Let us consider our literal translation of *nqe*

* *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*, "The book of 'Genesis'" (Canyon Country, Cal.: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1978), pp. 18 ff.

la inqe further (see #4), and this time examine it without the presence of the negative. Let us suppose that Ieue "to make innocent is making innocent." We have the fact from later revelation that the ultimate He has in view is the making innocent of His creatures to such a degree that He will actually constitute or appoint them to the place of righteous individuals in His sight. All who are able to meditate on the portent of this future glory which shall be ours are thrilled by the thought. However, here in Exodus we are only concerned with the early dealings of Ieue with His people. And we herein find that He was not *then* engaged in the process of making Israel innocent in order to, resultantly, finally *make* them innocent while yet mortal and under law. As long as they continue to be moved by wicked and crooked hearts they will never be innocent (Jer.17:9, cf Ezek.18:20). In fact, the law increased the *offense* of sin (Rom. 5:20). It was certainly not a means of making Israel innocent. The law was impotent as a means of making Israel just and innocent for it was "infirm through the flesh" (Rom.8:3).

It is only under their future new covenant that Israel will walk in righteousness ideally, for then God will cause them to do so and will give them a new heart and spirit (Ezek.36:26,27). But under the Mt. Sinai covenant they were "generating [sons] into slavery" (Gal.4:24).

The enigmatic pronouncement of Exodus 34:7, then, is simply to the effect that Ieue was not *therein* in the process of making His people innocent. Rather He was locking them up under sin through the law (Gal.3:22, Rom.3:19,20). But since it is revealed *here* (in Exodus 34:6) that He is *gracious*, it is thus intimated that He is nonetheless *able* to make innocent

those who are simply, at present, not *yet* innocent. "Behold! Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great vigor and by Thy outstretched arm. *Not any matter is too marvelous for Thee*" (Jer.32:17)!

It was many hundreds of years after the time when God first gave Israel the law that He finally provided the great Sacrifice, and *through that Lamb He will yet make them just, and consequently innocent!* Only thus can He reveal Himself to be as this very context declares: "Ieue, Ieue, a Deity compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and with much kindness and truth, preserving justice and kindness for thousands, bearing depravity and trespassing and sin . . ." (Exod.34:6,7, tentative C.V.). This passage is one of the highest and fullest statements we have concerning the Deity in all of the Hebrew Scriptures.

(12) The usual rendering of Exodus 34:7 is a direct denial of God's compassion and grace. It is absolutely contrary to all the entities and attributes of the Deity, especially those in this very context which we have just pointed out. When the profane rendering of the A.V. and its imitators is combined with the glorious thoughts of the context, it makes an antinomy and is hence quite unintelligible as well as most insulting to God. It brands Him as an unjust, vindictive enemy who brings suffering on succeeding generations without any good and loving purpose and who refuses to provide any means to remove it. "Visiting the *depravities* of the fathers upon the children" is concerned with the fact that Adam's depravity did not die with him. But rather the crooked and evil heart and wicked disposition which God gave to him, were passed on to his descendants. The particular failings of our parents and grandparents weaken us and we often find that we have many of their depravities. In fact, we

will have many such failings unless God should remove them from us by His grace.

At first sight these facts seem to conflict with God's compassion and kindness. Since He is so gracious and kind, why does He not *immediately* make men innocent? *Why* does He lock them up in stubbornness and shut them up to depravity? Truly, these are among God's inscrutable judgments. While it may not be readily understood, the purpose of evil is within the realm of our faculties of apprehension if God should enlighten our hearts and give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him (*cf* Eph.1:17,18). God reveals His secret wisdom to some, and we may speak of it among the mature. God reveals His wisdom through His spirit, "for the spirit is searching all, *even the depths of God*" (1 Cor.2:10, *cf* 6-9).

When we ask *Why* God did not long ago constitute man incapable of sin, we might as well ask, Why did He let Adam linger on in sin and dying for hundreds of years and how is it that He cursed the ground for *his sake* (Gen.3:17)? The answer is that it is only in such a condition—by the very nature of things—that God can be gracious and compassionate and bear with man's depravity, and trespass and sin. *If He is to be man's Saviour, man must be a sinner.* By constituting men as sinners apart from their own acts (Rom.5:19), and making them subject to His judgment for their sins, God thus takes away men's innocence, but only because this is essential for the display of His kindness and grace.

The same phrase *to make innocent is not making innocent* is also found in a similar connection in Numbers 14:18. Though the A.V. sees fit to confusingly render *innocent* as "unpunished" in Jeremiah 30:11

and 46:28, the same phrase is nonetheless also found in these passages in the Hebrew. In both of these it appears in a couplet with the same parallel line: *I discipline you for judgment*. They will yet be *set right*, or judged, and their present state of not being innocent is the necessary preparatory condition for the reception of His future mercy and grace.

It must be emphasized that that which is stated in Exodus 34:7 is only concerned with God's dealings with Israel *at that time*. The grammar proves this. However, it is evident that the same basic principle holds true in the eonian affairs of all mankind, which are, in essence, "*the experience of evil*" which "*God gives the sons of humanity to humble them by it*" (Eccl.1:13). Though God gives mankind ever so much evil, He must have a gracious and good *purpose* in so doing, for it is clearly set forth in Exodus 34:6 that He is compassionate, *gracious* and kind.

We have seen how necessary it is that there should be sinners so that they would provide Him with objects of His grace. But all this is to no avail until His gracious compassion is exercised and sinners are saved. During the eonian times, God will see that there are sinners to receive His grace. Only thus can He manifest His righteousness, goodness and love.

"For God locks up all together in stubbornness, *that He should be merciful to all*. O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments and untraceable His ways! For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!" (Rom.11:32-36).