

Is the word 'expiación' in Hebrews 1:3 an error in the RVG?

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A recent article criticizing Dr. Humberto Gomez and his revision of the Spanish Bible brought to question the following verse:

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (KJV)

Heb 1:3 el cual, siendo el resplandor de su gloria, y la imagen misma de su sustancia, y quien sustenta todas las cosas con la palabra de su poder, habiendo hecho la expiación de nuestros pecados por medio de sí mismo, se sentó a la diestra de la Majestad en las alturas, (RVG04)

The 1602, 1865, & 1909 revisions of the Reina Valera Spanish Bible translate the word purge in Heb. 1:3 as purgación. The RVG (Reina Valera Gomez) changed the word purgación to expiación. A promoter of the 1865 revision of the Reina Valera Bible accused Humberto Gomez of corrupting the text in this passage because it does not mirror the exact wording of the KJV. The purpose of this article is to explain why this change in Heb. 1:3 is not an error. In fact it will be demonstrated that the word Bro. Gomez chose here accurately reflects the KJV rendering as well as the Greek word καθαρισμον (kath-ar-is-mon) of which it is based upon.

As a student of languages, there are some things you must be aware of. First, languages are not exactly the same. Secondly, they are not always understood the same way. Third and consequently, they cannot always be applied the same way. This is the very case of Hebrews 1:3.

Clarence Larkin, a very known Bible scholar stated this about the issue:

"Its supernatural origin (The Bible) is seen in the fact that it can be translated into any language." (*Dispensational truth...*, p 2)

This is called SEMANTICS (the study of the meaning of words). If you ignore this fact, you will make a fool out of yourself when approaching The Holy Text. Some brethren don't seem to understand that Formal Equivalence does not necessarily mean that there is ONLY one option of word choice that accurately reflects the base text. There are sometimes a pool of words that can all be somewhat of an accurate representation of the KJV and the Received Texts, but the translator must choose the word that both reflects the KJV and Received Texts as well as makes sense in the receptor language.

So, when we face Hebrews 1:3, it raises the question, "Does the word expiación destroy the doctrine of Jesus Christ's efficacious purging of our sins at Calvary?" No, not at all. What most so called "Bible Students" fail to do is READ the Dictionary. In this case let us look at the definition to the word expiación as it is found in the Real Academy Spaniard Dictionary, the authority and official standard for words in the Spanish language (see the online dictionary at <http://www.rae.es/rae.html>).

Expiar (Del lat. expiare).

1. tr. Borrar las culpas, purificarse de ellas por medio de algún sacrificio.

2. tr. Dicho de un delincuente: Sufrir la pena impuesta por los tribunales.

3. tr. Padecer trabajos a causa de desaciertos o malos proceder.

4. tr. Purificar algo profanado, como un templo.

(http://buscon.rae.es/drael/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=expiar)

Notice the primary definition of this word in bold. Here is the translation of this definition into English:

1. Erase the faults (or guilts), purifying them through the medium of some sacrifice.

Now let's compare the primary definition of **expiación** to the definition of the word used in the KJV which is **purged**.

Purge

1. **To cleanse or purify by separating and carrying off whatever is impure**, heterogeneous, foreign or superfluous; as, to purge the body by evacuation; to purge the Augean stable. It is followed by away, of, or off. We say, to purge away or to purge off filth, and to purge a liquor of its scum.

2. **To clear from guilt or moral defilement; as, to purge one of guilt or crime; to purge away sin.**

"Purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." Psa 79.

"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." Psa 51.

3. To clear from accusation or the charge of a crime, as in ordeal.

4. To remove what is offensive; to sweep away impurities. Ezek 20.

Notice that **expiación** means the exact same thing as the wording in the KJV. They are synonyms. Both words deal with a cleansing or a purifying of guilt, impurity, and moral defilement. In fact, notice that **expiación** emphasizes a particular type of cleansing. It carries the connotation of a purification of guilt *through the means of an atoning sacrifice*. According to the dictionary, the word **expiación** does not diminish from the KJV wording or its Greek basis at all.

To bolster these facts, let us also consider the definition of the word **atonement** since that is the subject of the verse:

Atonement

1. Agreement; concord; reconciliation, after enmity or controversy. Rom 5.

Between the Duke of Glo'ster and your brothers.

2. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; with for.

“And Moses said to Aaron, go to the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make an atonement for thyself and for the people”. Lev 9.

When a man has been guilty of any vice, the best atonement he can make for it is, to warn others not to fall into the like.

The Phocians behaved with so much gallantry, that they were thought to have made a sufficient atonement for their former offense.

3. In theology, the expiation of sin made by the obedience and personal sufferings of Christ.

According the above definition of the **atonement**, the Spanish word **expiación** is equivalent to the word **purged** as it is used in Heb. 1:3 and it accurately reflects its Greek basis **katharismos**. There is no conflict in Heb. 1:3 between the KJV and the RVG.

Amen. So what we see here is that the first, not secondary meaning in the Spanish language is given to **“To blot out the guilt, purify yourself from them (the Guilt) through some sacrifice.”** Anybody who knows a little bit about Catholicism’s impregnation throughout the Spanish Dictionary, can tell towards what direction some words are geared, yet the Bible meaning is clearly seen and described. Christ was our Sacrifice! (To those who really study)

Someone suggested that perhaps a better rendering is **purificación** (purification) as it stands in the RV1960. This is not an erroneous rendering. However, **expiación** brings out the connotation that the purification involved is the result of an atoning sacrifice. **Expiación** brings out the exact meaning of the Greek word **katharismos** just as it is being used in the context of Heb. 1:3 and is therefore the best and most accurate translation out of the pool of possible renderings that could be used here. **Purgacion** is not an error and neither is **purificación**. They can both be acceptable translations. But as stated earlier, the goal of the translator or reviser is to render the *most* accurate formal equivalent that will also make the most sense in the receptor language. Today, the word **purgar**, the root form of **purgacion** is commonly used amongst Spanish-speakers as a medical term meaning to cleanse one’s bowels. **Expiación** is strictly a theological term and again it brings out the exact definition of the underlying Greek word as well as accurately represents the wording of the KJV.

Some have insisted that it is a double-standard to revise some of the antiquated wording in the Spanish Reina Valera Bible while standing against those who wish to “update” the KJV. But they fail to realize the difference. We contend that **the KJV is a finalized text** whereas the Reina Valera has been in need of revision due to the addition of Critical Text corruption through modernistic Bible societies since 1602. Until the RVG, the Spanish world has been without a Bible that was totally free of Critical Text corruption. So when a Bible is open for revision, there is nothing wrong with the reviser making changes that clarifies the language in such a way that it makes more sense to the common man, so long as the change does not contradict the Received Texts which underlie the KJV. A good example of this was when the 1960 revisers updated the word **salud** to **salvación** for the word ‘salvation’. Today, the word **salud** is no longer understood as salvation. **Salud** is now the word for ‘health’. The average Spanish speaker will not recognize the word **salud** as salvation anymore. The word in common usage now is **salvación**. This was actually a good change in the Spanish Bible. Unfortunately, the 1960 revisers went further than just language clarifications by also

incorporating Westcott & Hort Critical Text corruption. Hence, the call for further revision. Again, we do not advocate the same for the KJV (language updating) because it is a finalized text, pure from corruption.

Furthermore, to make a point about the Bible illiterates, who “speak evil of the things that they understand not”, Webster gives two Bible verses where the word “purge” is found. The 1865 Spanish Bible as well as the RVG does not render the word “purge” as it is found in the King James Bible in these same places.

- Ps 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and **purge** away our sins, for thy name's sake. (KJV)

Ps. 79:9 Ayúdanos, o! Dios, salud nuestra, por la honra de tu nombre: y líbranos, y **aplácate** sobre nuestros pecados por causa de tu nombre. (1865)

- Ps 51:7 ¶ **Purge** me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (KJV)

Psa 51:7 **Purificame** con hisopo, y seré limpio: lávame, y seré emblanquecido más que la nieve. (1865)

Why is there no complaint about these Bible verses? This shows the inconsistency and dishonesty of those behind the attacks. Not only that, but the word “purge” appears 15 times in the KJB, but only one time in the 1865 Spanish Bible. The word “purged” appears 12 times in the KJB, but only five times in the 1865 Spanish Bible. According to the logic of those criticizing Bro. Gomez for not following the exact wording of the KJV in Heb. 1:3, shouldn't it be “purge” and “purged” in every single occasion?

We will tell them like Job “Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me”, because in I Samuel 3:14 where the KJB renders the word “purged”, the 1865 Spanish Bible renders the word **expiación!** (Atonement) What about that? Did Mora and Pratt (the 1865 revisers) destroy the meaning of the whole text in I Sam. 3:14 by not following the exact wording of the KJV?

Other examples where the 1865 did not follow the exact wording of the KJV are:

- 2 Chronicles 34:8 - It reads “cleansed” instead of “purged” in the 1865.
- Proverbs 16:6 – It reads “reconciled” instead of “purged” in the 1865.
- Isaiah 22:14 – It reads “forgiven” instead of “purged” in the 1865.
- Hebrews 10:2 – It reads “purified” instead of “purged” in the 1865.

If Bro. Gomez is to be criticized for not following the exact wording of the KJV in Heb. 1:3, then so is Mora and Pratt of the 1865 revision for not following the exact wording of the KJV in all of the above mentioned passages.

The word used in Hebrews 1:3 “expiación” in the RVG responds to the ceremonial sacrifice of the OT according to the context. It is indeed a synonym (of “purgar”) but in this case the clarification enriches the reading in Spanish. This verse refers to the ceremonial sacrifices of the Old Testament which could not be as effective as the final sacrifice of Christ. According to the context, it compares the OT prophets by whom God spoke before (verse 1), and specially Moses with whom Jesus is being mainly contrasted.

To say that Hebrews 1:3 could have been the only verse in the Spanish bible to prove wrong the doctrine of Purgatory is totally naïve and demonstrates incompetency to rightly divide God's word. The doctrine of Purgatory has no foundation in the Bible.

The Biblical doctrine that destroys the fictitious doctrine of Purgatory is indeed the Doctrine of the Atonement itself; that Jesus offered himself as the victim to reconcile us with the Father through His blood once and for all.

In conclusion, the fact is that the word **expiación** is a pure and accurate translation of the Greek word **katharismos**, and is in no way, shape, or form in conflict with the KJV wording, nor does it diminish the message of purification of guilt through an atoning sacrifice of which the wording is meant to portray.

Humberto Gomez catches a lot of heat from those who accuse him of trying to conform the Spanish Bible too much to the KJV. He has been highly criticized for publicly stating his conviction that the KJV is perfect. It's a shame that the few times that he doesn't mirror the KJV word for word due to language issues, he is still criticized. As the old saying goes, "You can't please everybody." Bro. Gomez is "damned if he does and damned if he doesn't." Some have already committed themselves to the revision of the Spanish Bible that they promote **and sell** that no matter what Bro. Gomez does, they will find a way to criticize. Erasmus dealt with the same type of critics in his day. He said:

"Nothing pleases them like blackening another's man good name...They care not for the disgrace to themselves so long as they injure me." (Life and Letters of Erasmus by J.A. Froude.)

Most these critics had their minds made up from the beginning and have no intentions of thinking outside of the box that they have created for themselves. They will never give the RVG a chance. But that is OK. The RVG is not for everybody! It is for Bible-believers that stand for the KJV and the Received Texts who refuse to settle for revisions of the Spanish Bible that contains Critical Text corruption.

We can complain all day over technicalities about how certain words can and should be translated. But at the end of the day, even the critics will have to admit that the RVG is a Spanish Bible of which the Alexandrian Critical Text has been totally eliminated. That is the main issue. Those of us who stand against Alexandrian corruption are satisfied with the RVG as we go forward in our obligations to win souls, edify saints, build churches, and glorify God in our respective Spanish-speaking areas. The RVG continues to grow on a world-wide scale (70,000 whole Bibles distributed in the past 2 years). It is being used by true Bible-believers in Spain, Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Belize, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, all over Mexico, and many Spanish ministries in the US.

We rejoice to know that Chick Publications are already reprinting and distributing their Spanish tracts and literature with the RVG. Victory Baptist Press is currently making preparations to print another batch of whole RVG Bibles. In addition to several presses already printing the RVG in the US, plans are already set for it to be also printed in Guatemala and Spain. The printing of the 3rd edition of the RVG is in the works. This final edition will be a bilingual RVG with the KJV parallel to it. Recently, the Trinitarian Bible Society released a statement to the Dean Burgon Society recognizing the RVG as the most accurate Spanish Bible today.

There is no reason to be discouraged by the criticism of those who refuse to be open-minded to the truth when there are so many positive things to focus on and rejoice about. The pure words of God will grow and multiply regardless.

As we close this article, we once again emphasize the definition of the word **expiación** in its root form as it stands in the Real Academy Dictionary of Spain, the authority and official standard of words in the Spanish language:

Expiar - Erase the faults (or guilts), purifying them through the medium of some sacrifice.

May God open the eyes of true Bible-believers to the richness of this pure word in Heb.1:3 as it stands in the RVG.

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Note: All 3 of the above authors share the same conviction with Dr. Humberto Gomez that the KJV is perfect and without error. They also believe that with the KJV as a guide and the Received Texts as the foundation, the Spanish-speaking people can have a Reina Valera Bible that is just as accurate as the English KJV. We contend that we have such a Bible in the RVG.