

Sunday, October 27, 2024—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 242 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (Kilburne’s *Dangerous Errors*)

Introduction

- In [Lesson 241](#) we looked at the market conditions that existed in the 17th century English Bible market and how they impacted the AV. In doing so, we touched upon the following topics:
 - Printing Bibles kept the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge solvent, thereby allowing them to publish other culturally relevant works.
 - According to William Kilburne’s *Proposals humbly presented to publick consideration, but more particularly, the Right-honourable the Sub-committee of the Parliament for Religion, concerning the Future printing of Bibles in English*, he stated “may gain by printing Bibles in all Volumes 10000.l. *per annum de claro*’ [for a year from the clear], an amount worth more than 2.4 million dollars in today’s money, according to Eric Nye’s [Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency](#) website. (McKitterick, 389)
 - Along with Kilburne, Archbishop George Abbott, who had been one of the original King James translators, complained about high prices and declining print quality.
 - “I knewe the tyme when greater care was had about printeing, the Bibles especiallie, good compositors and the best correctors were gotten being grave and learned men, and the paper and letter rare and faire every way of the best; but now the paper is naught, the composers boyes, and the correctors unlearned: There is a farmer [monopolist] and he makes the benefitt, and careth for nothing about it. They heertofore spent their whole time in printeing, but these looke to gaine, gaine, gaine, nothing els.” (Norton, 95)
 - We also looked at Michael Sparke’s 1641 piece titled [Scintilla](#) which sheds light on the inflated price of books during the early 1640s. In this piece Sparke covers a variety of different topics related to the 17th century English Bible market. All told, we observed the following difficulties in the market:
 - Inaccurate & Uneven Publication
 - Varied Quality
 - Price Gouging
 - Monopoly Power

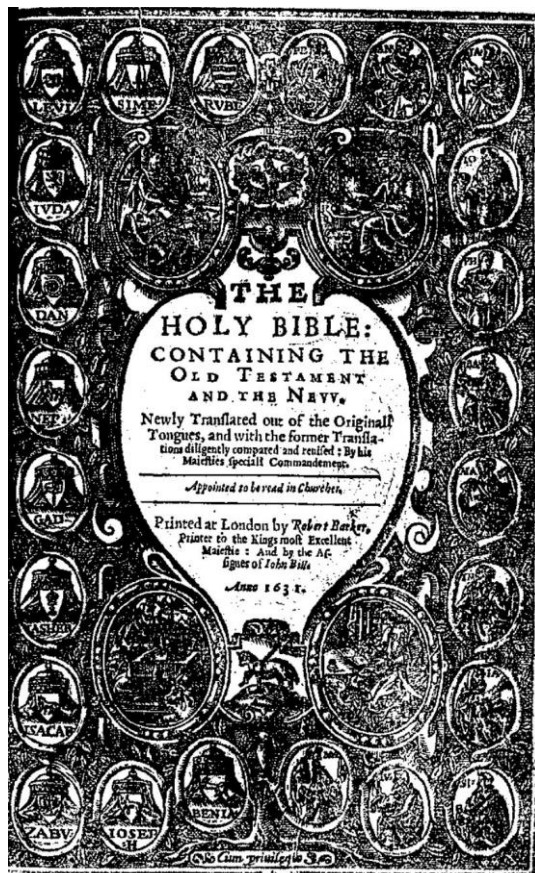
- Competition
 - Smuggling & Foreign Interference
- In this Lesson we want to consider William Kilburne’s famous 1660-piece *Dangerous errors in several late printed Bibles to the great scandal, and corruption of sound and true religion* as a way of framing a conversation of the more egregious printed editions between 1611 and 1660.

Kilburne’s *Dangerous Errors*

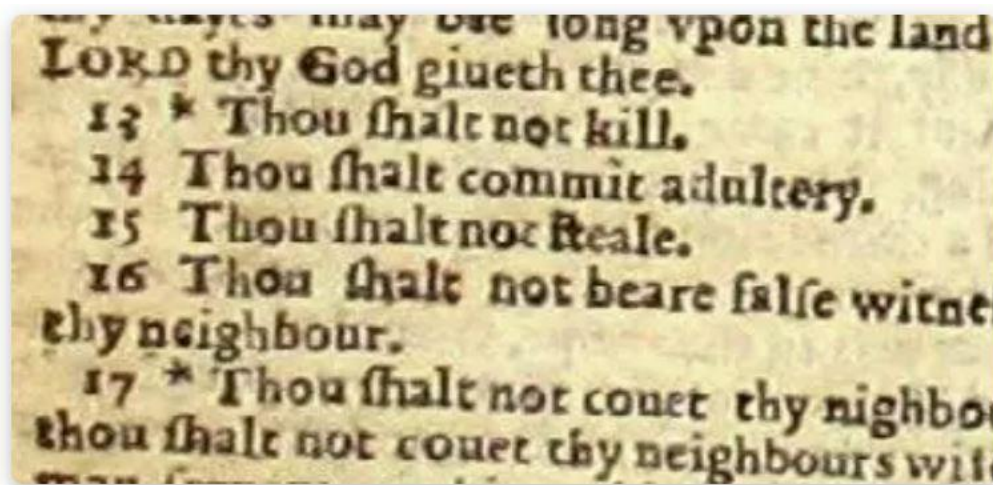
- Kilburne’s famous tract covers errors of the press in roughly ten editions between 1631 and 1657. We will be following the chronological order presented by Dr. David Norton in “Appendix 6 Kilburne’s list of errors” in *A Textual History of the King James Bible*. Where possible we will insert screenshots of the different readings noted by Kilburne. These editions are as follows.

1631 Barker and Assigns of Bill. 8° (H444)

- The “Wicked Bible” from 1631 is the first printing discussed by Kilburne.



- This edition is also known as “the Wicked Bible” on account of its famous printer’s error at Exodus 20:14 that omitted the word “not” from the seventh commandment.



- Professor David Norton states the following regarding this famous edition in his book *A Textual History of The King James Bible*.
 - “The most notorious was, of course, the omission of ‘not’ from the seventh commandment (Exod. 20:14) in the ‘wicked’ Bible of 1631, an omission generally taken to have been sabotage perpetrated as part of the ongoing struggles between Barker and Norton . . .” (Norton, 95)
- Footnote 29 on page 96 of Norton adds some more details regarding “the Wicked Bible.”
 - “The edition was burnt and the printers fined £300 (not the £2,000 or £3,000 Kilburne, too often dependent on rumour, reports, p. 5). Scrivener noted that ‘a single copy is said to survive in the Library at Wolfenbutterl’ (p. 25 n.), but there is a copy in the Bible Society Library. When I opened this at the offending page a loud crack of thunder erupted outside.” (Norton, 96)
- A.S. Herbert also has a sizable entry on “the Wicked Bible” in his *Catalogue* which reads as follows:
 - “This edition is known as the “Wicked Bible” from the error in Exod. xx. 14, where the Seventh Commandment reads: *Thou shalt commit adultery*. The printers are said to have been fined £300 [Equivalent to £63,097 in 2023, according to [Wikipedia](#).] for the offence. Martin Lucas is sometimes named as Barker’s partner in the production of this book, but H.R. Plumer, in this *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, 1641-1667*, p. 24, states that Lucas was not the printer. ‘In all probability the real printers were Miles, Fletcher, John Haviland, and Robert Young, who controlled many of the London print houses at the time.’ John Bill, the First, died in 1630 leaving his son, John Bill, the Second, ‘All his

estates and terms in his part of the King's Printing Office.' See also P.M. Handover: 'the "Wicked" Bible and the King's Printing House, Black Friars' in the Times (London) House Journal, Dec. 1958, pp. 215-218. This suggests that the error was deliberate on the part of the partisan Norton to discredit the Barkers. Kilburne mentions it in his *Dangerous Errors*. . .

Peter Heylyn in his *Cyprianus Anglicus*, London 1668, p. 228, under the date 1632 gives the following account of this edition: 'His Majesties Printers, at or about this time, had committed a scandalous mistake in our English Bibles, by leaving out the word Not in the Seventh Commandment. His Majesty being made acquainted with it by the Bishop of London, Order was given for calling the Printers into the High-Commission where upon Evidence of the Fact, the whole Impression was called in, and the Printers deeply fined, as they just merited.' (Herbert, 162)

- Gordon Campbell also comments upon the "Wicked Bible" in his 2010 publication, *Bible: The Story of The King James Version 1611-2011*:
 - "Although the evidence points to a malicious act, possibly by an ally of Norton, neither Barker or Lucas pleaded sabotage as a defense when they were arraigned before the court of high commission 8 May 1632. In October Barker and Lucas were heavily fined (£300), and a few months later the King intervened at the behest of Archbishop Laud, commanding that the fine 'be converted to the present buying of . . . Greek letters [type] and matrices' and ordering Barker and Lucas to print one Greek work a year. All copies of the offending Bible (which is now known as the Wicked Bible) were ordered to be destroyed, as a result of which it is now a rare and valuable book. The eventual destination of the fine did not affect Barkers' dire financial situation, and, although his name continued to appear on title pages, he spent the rest of his life in debtor's prison. On 19 August 1644 he yielded his rights to the Bible patent to the Stationers' Company, which granted him a monthly pension of 10 shillings, but he died in prison." (Campbell, 109-111)
- Regarding this edition, Gordon Cambell goes on to state the following:
 - "In 1630 the death of Bill and the imprisonment of Norton should have signaled a fresh start for Robert Barker, but the following year disaster struck. An edition of the bible with the imprint of Barker and Martin Lucas (John Bill's executor) omitted the 'not' from the version of the seventh commandment in Exodus 20, and so made adultery compulsory. It has long been thought that this could have been a disastrous printer's error, but Ian Gadd . . . has recently noted that the court judgment also says that the edition printed the beginning of Deuteronomy 5:24 as 'the Lord our God hath shewed his glory and his great asse' (instead of 'greatnesse'), which is surely mischief rather than error; one mistake may be an improbable accident, but two points to sabotage. In seventeenth-century English 'ass' was a respectable word meaning 'donkey', not a course word meaning 'buttocks', but the reading nonetheless verges on blasphemy. No copy of a

bible with the ‘great asse’ misprint is known to survive, though at least three copies (in Bloomington, Toronto, and Cambridge) have a blob of ink over what is likely to be ‘great asse’.” (Campbell, 109)

1643 (identification uncertain)

- After discussing the “Wicked Bible” Kilburne turned his attention to an unidentified edition from 1643. Regarding this edition Kilburne stated:
 - “. . . in the late Kings time, as I have heard, which happened long before the late wars began: In which time through the absence of the Kings Printers, and cessation of Bible-Printing at London, many erroneous English Bibles were printed in, and imported from Holland; which, being diligently compared by the late Assembly of Divines, were reported to the Parliament in 1643. to be corrupt, & dangerous to Religion; exhibiting to them these three faults only; for which the impression was suppressed and condemned to the fire, and a Prohibition made against the Importation of any English Bibles for the future.” (Kilburne)
- Given the context, it seems clear that Kilburne is referring to an imported edition from Holland. Regarding this edition, Kilburne goes on to note the following three errors:
 - “Gen. 36:24. Ana that found rulers in the wilderness—*for* mules.

Ruth 4:13. The Lord gave her corruption—*for* conception.

Luke 21:28. Look up, and lift up your heads, your condemnation draweth nigh—*for* redemption.” (Kilburne)

1648, Field. 4^o (H605)

- Kilburne stated the following regarding this printing:
 - “You may also take notice of another fault discovered to me by a Reverend Minister, escaped in a 4^o. Bible of Iohn Fields, printed at London, (amongst many other faults therein,) viz.
 - Psal. 105.29. *He turned their waters into blood, and slew their Flesh, for Fish.*” (Kilburne)

1653 Pearl Bible, Field. 24^o (H635–7)

- Regarding this edition Kilburne wrote:

- “In a Pearl-Bible printed by John Field at London in 1653. in volume 24, (very small to carry in pockets) whereof there have been near 20000 dispersed, are these egregious faults, viz.

All the Dedications and Titles of David's Psalms are wholly left out, being part of the original Text in Hebrew, and intimating the cause, and occasion of the writing and composing those Psalms, whereby the matter may be better illustrated.

John 9.21. Or who hath opened his eyes we know not. *These words are wholly omitted.*

21 But by what means he seeth, we know not he is of God. ask him, he shall speak for his self.

Rom. 6.13. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of Righteousness unto sinne. *for unrighteousness.*

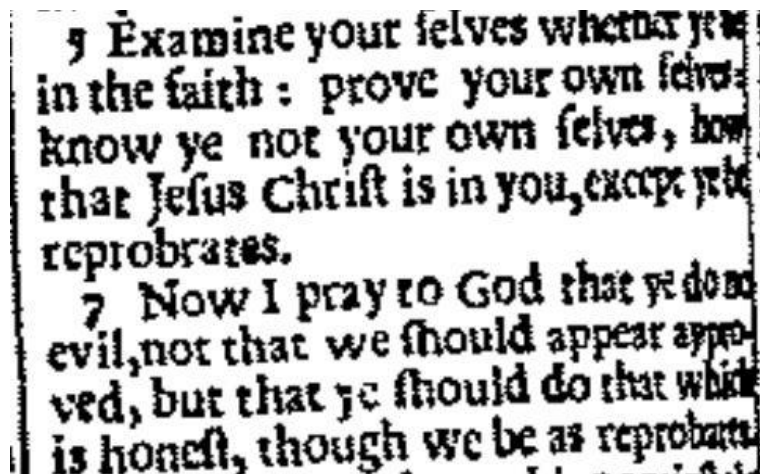
13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of righteousness unto sin: but yield your selves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

1 Cor. 6.9. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the Kingdome of God? *for shall not inherit?” (Kilburne)*

1655, Field. 12° (H647–8)

- Kilburne stated the following about this edition:
 - “In a small Bible in volume 12. printed by John Field at London in 1655. whereof great numbers have been dispersed.

- A Catalogue of 91 notorious faults, amongst many others therein, were presented by Mr. Hills to Mr. Secretary of Estate, and by him recommended to an honorable Member of the late Parliament. One whereof is *2 Cor. 13.6. But I trust that ye shall know that we are not Reprobates.* which verse is wholly omitted.” (Kilburne)



1655, Field. 12°, another edition (?H647–8)

- Regarding this edition Kilburne writes:
 - “In another Bible in volume 12. printed also by John Field at London in 1655. whereof great numbers have been dispersed.

Upon my reading of the six first Chapters only in St. Matthew, I found 10. notable faults, and have received general information from persons of worth, that the residue of the Book is correspondent; which was evidenced to a Committee of Parliament, in so much that they seized them, and prohibited the sale thereof, and of the former Bibles in Mr. Fields hands as also of the ensuing Bible, which notwithstanding that restraint, he hath since divulged.” (Kilburne)

1656, Field. 12° (H651)

- This duodecimo edition constituted one of Kilburne’s longest entries:
 - “In a Bible in volume 12. printed by John Field at London in 1656. you may observe these faults, viz.

Isai. 10.26. Cap. 13.3. Cap. 14.24. Cap. 17.8. Cap. 28.17. And the waters shall overthrow the hiding place. for overflow. Cap. 48.19. Cap. 49.22. and so generally through the whole old Testament. But in the new Testament be pleased to peruse these, viz.

Luk. 23.42, 51. Cap, 24.24. Joh. 1.51. Cap. 2.9, 10. Cap. 3.21. Cap. 5.2. The pool Bethsaida. for Bethesda. ver. 23. As they honour their Father. for the Father Emphatically. Cap. 6.29, 33. Cap. 7.39. But this spake he of the Spirits, which they that believe on him should receive, for Spirit, speaking onely of the Holy Ghost, as appeareth in the same verse. Cap. 13.22. Cap. 14.13, 21. And he that loveth me, shall loved. for shall be loved of my Father. Cap. 15.17. These things I commanded, for command you. Cap. 17.12. That the Scriptures might be fulfilled. for Scripture, speaking of Iudas the sonne of perdition, and referring to Psal. 109.8. Cap. 19.37. Cap. 20.25. And put my fingers, for finger. Cap. 21.17. Act. 1.7. Cap. 4.15. Counsel (or advice,) for Councill (or a consistorie.) And this is often reiterated in other places. Cap. 8.36. A very base omission, and false justification of the words to the confusion of the sense. Cap. 13.1, 6, 26. he, for they, a grosse fault. Rom. 4.10. Cap. 6.23. meer nonsense. 1 Ioh. 4.20. 2 Ioh. ver. 1. Rev. 1.1. Cap. 21.10.

I might particularize many more, especially in the Contents; which generally are falsely perverted, and mutilated to the great impediment, and obstruction of the right understanding of the scope and Text of the Chapters.” (Kilburne)

- In the next Lesson we will finish looking at Kilburne’s famous piece *Dangerous Errors* as well as try and draw some conclusions.

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