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The Bible Says What?

From the raggedy drawers in dingy motel rooms to the elegantly furnished bookshelves of world famous libraries, one book sits with a story that started thousands of years ago and, to this day, continues. Over the course of history, numerous books have risen and influenced the contemporary world and its principles. However, none holds the phenomenal power over individual lives and various cultures across the globe like *The Holy Bible*. The story of the Bible is not one of clean edges and perfection. Rather this collection of Judo-Christian sacred texts has been put through several years of intensive revisions, introspections, mutations, and evaluations to become the well-renowned binding of Sacred Scriptures that is now found everywhere. In the heart of Houston, TX, sheltered among the walls of Houston Baptist University's Dunham Bible Museum, sits a link to the story of the Bible—the infamous *Wicked Bible*.

The *Wicked Bible* is the product of “a blasphemous typographical error that made its way into print” in the year 1631 under the hands of England's royal printers, Robert Barker and Martin Lucas (Bever). At the time, King Charles I of England had commissioned the duo to print substantial copies of this small, pocket-sized Bible as to have “full-text copies of the [it]” more readily and cheaply available for purchase around the kingdom (Green). However, nearly a year later, an irrevocable mistake was discovered “after 1,000 copies were printed, [thus] causing an uproar in [the old] conservative Anglican Britain” (Muhr).

Nevertheless, the question remains; what was this grave mistake? What typographical error gave this edition of the Bible a permanent and significant spot in the history of Bibles? Upon viewing the pages of the book, it is evident that the editors of the sacred texts “omitted the word ‘not’ [from] Exodus 20:14” (Muhr), thus rendering the original verse from saying “Thou

shalt *not* commit adultery” to “Thou shalt commit adultery.” Three letters, one small, seemingly insignificant word—not. However, those three letters are all it took for this edition of the Bible to go from being a sacred and revered text to a sacrilegious and vulgar version of the religious book. Fortunately the laymen and the commoners of the time were familiar enough with the Ten Commandments as to not act upon this blunder. According to HBU’s very own Diana Severance, director of the Dunham Bible Museum, “There was enough Christian teaching, and pervasive Christian teaching in England, to know that this [profanity] was an error” (Green). As a result, there was no noteworthy religious impact on 17th century England that was a direct result of the distribution of the *Wicked Bible*.

Though the *Wicked Bible* is more famously known for a typographical error in the Book

Some called it an unintentional printing error. While others claimed that Barker and Lucas were trying to intentionally spread profanity and religious heresy around England. According to the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, the printers were not “grave and learned men” and ought not to be entrusted with such responsibilities (McLelland). However, the most extreme and perhaps quite plausible explanation to the mystery, is the theory that Robert Barker’s project

