

Ryan Center News

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Fall 2007

High Praise for Center's "One Bible, One Gospel" Conference

The Ryan Center recently held its biennial Bible Study Conference at Union University. The theme was "One Bible, One Gospel: Exploring the Unity of Scripture," a title suggested by the conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Paul House. House is Associate Dean and Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. He gave three addresses which challenged conference attendees to devote more attention to the Old Testament, giving particular attention to its equal status with the New Testament as *Christian Scripture*.

Registration for the conference exceeded many expectations. Nearly 250 participants traveled from as far away as Illinois, Louisiana, and Missouri. One church in Chattanooga, Tennessee sent many of its Sunday school teachers to the conference as part of a church leadership training event.

Conference goers responded well to the engaging speakers and to the

important topic. "[The conference] was a real revelation to me of the connection between the Old and New Testaments," stated one attendee. Another expressed that she "was glad to see the inclusion of the Old Testament in the discussion of the gospel."

Other conference speakers included nationally recognized scholar Dr. Grant Osborne from Trinity International University in Chicago and Dr. Ken Mathews, Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School. Various Union University professors also led sessions which covered topics ranging from bible material for children to a study of historic abuses of the Old Testament.

Explorer's Bible Study co-sponsored the conference again this year and provided great insight on how bible study impacts ministry to women. Mary Jane Jones & Marni McKenzie led a session on "Engaging Women in Effective Bible Study."

Comments from Conference Registrants:

"I was glad to see the inclusion of the Old Testament in the discussion of the gospel."

"It was a real revelation to me of the connection between the Old and New Testaments"

"Many of the questions that I have had in my mind got answered"

"I appreciated your strict adherence to Scripture and the attention to detail of the Word of God"

"...the theme was just what I needed!"

"...very well done, both practical and deep"

"The event was a smashing success by any measure. The Ryan Center conference has become the largest ministry outreach program to lay people that the university conducts. The diversity of attendees was so encouraging -- members from African American churches, Explorer's Bible Study, SBC churches, and non-denominational churches fellowshiped in one room.

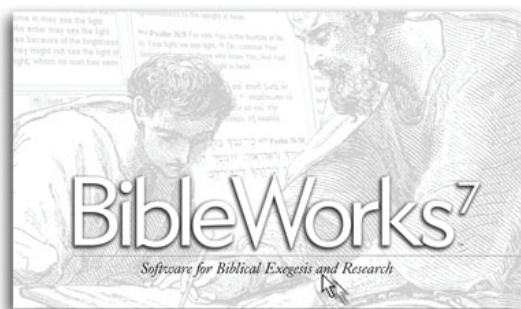
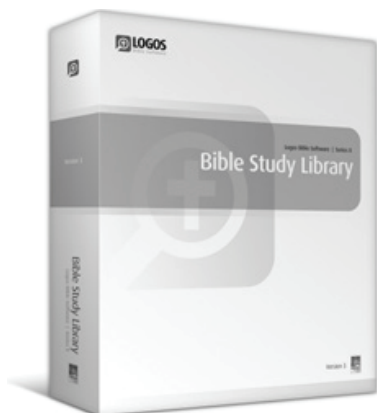
The addresses and breakout sessions were outstanding. Paul House spoke at exactly the right level for the audience.

One pastor said to me, "When you bring your people to something like this... either they walk away saying, 'Hey! I really CAN study and understand the Bible.' Or they say, 'Serious Bible Study is only for the scholars.'"

Praise God the Ryan Center is exploding this myth."

--Greg Thornbury, Dean of the School of Christian Studies, Union University

Which Bible Study Software is Right For You?



The Ryan Center has recently received generous donations of software from **Logos Bible Software** and **BibleWorks**. These are the two most popular bible study tools available for PC computers. We are blessed to have access to both titles in the Center so that students, professors, and others can try them out and discover for themselves which title best meets their individual needs.

BibleWorks is focused primarily on word-by-word or verse-by-verse study of the actual text of the Scriptures whereas **Logos Bible Software** has a broader scope of tools ranging from electronic books on theology to the collected sermons of many great preachers of the past.

BibleWorks seems to be best for word studies and textual analysis of individual passages. **Logos** is best for those who want to assemble as large a library as they possibly can on their computer. (This is especially appealing for overseas missionaries who simply cannot take along their personal libraries because of the weight and size of the printed materials.)

For Mac users the options are more limited. **Accordance** software seems to be the most popular Mac title available these days. Though limited in the total number of users, **Accordance** is highly acclaimed and very popular among current Union University students.

For more information go to:

www.logos.com

www.bibleworks.com

www.accordancebible.com

Keep up with the latest reviews and comparisons of bible software at:

www.bsreview.org

Merrell donates 4,000 volume library to Ryan Center



Bill Merrell, former vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, recently donated his library of 4,000 volumes to Union's R.C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies. (Photo by Ben Dockery)

Arthur William "Bill" Merrell has donated his personal library of 4,000 volumes to Union University's R.C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies.

Merrell is the former vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. His is the largest book donation ever made to the Ryan Center.

"We are deeply grateful for the generosity of Bill Merrell to Union University," Union President David S. Dockery said. "This book collection will help students and ministers throughout this region for years to come."

Ray Van Neste, director of the Ryan Center, also expressed his appreciation. He said the library contained books ranging from great literature and poetry, to classic works of theology, to recent works on theology, biblical studies and pastoral ministry.

"We are honored to receive the library of Dr. Merrell," Van Neste said. "He had an excellent

library. It is a blessing simply as a model of the sort of books one ought to have and read. Here his books will continue to be a blessing to the students, pastors and Bible teachers who use the center's library."

Merrell had a stroke in 2003, and said afterwards he began to have double vision, which made reading more difficult for him. He began thinking about what to do with the books he had collected through his years in the ministry.

"When I could no longer read as easily as I once did, I realized those resources would probably not be used again unless I donated them to some institution that was true to the gospel," Merrell said. "I thought of Union University, and I believe that they may do more good for more ministry students there than they would anywhere else.

"I wanted to be a blessing, and I wanted the books to be a blessing to pastors in the area and to students who were called to preach the gospel of Christ," Merrell continued. "It's investing in the work of the Lord, I thought."

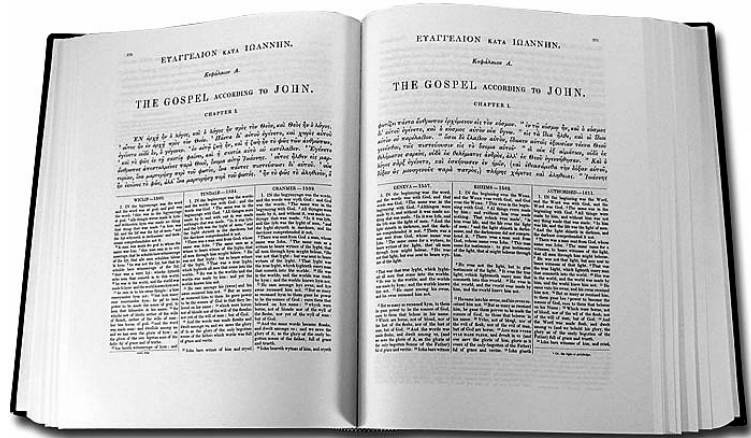
Merrell graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity, and from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry.

-Story by Tim Ellsworth

"...I wanted the books to be a blessing to pastors in the area and to students who were called to preach the gospel of Christ."

-Bill Merrell

Latest Center Artifact: An 1841 Hexapla New Testament



Consider the benefit and convenience of opening just one book on your desk and being able to view six different translations of the New Testament side-by-side on the same page. That is just what the English printer Samuel Bagster produced in the year 1841.

Bagster and Sons Printing Company of London gathered six different English versions of the New Testament and combined them, together with the original Greek text, into a one volume *Hexapla* (a Greek word meaning "six-fold").

The Ryan Center is proud to display an original copy of this work. It was graciously donated by David and Linda Shoaf of Hornlake, Mississippi.

The original Greek is printed along the top of each page and below it are the following six English translations in parallel columns:

- 1. John Wyclif's Middle English version** (c. 1380) was the first substantive and thorough English translation of Holy Scripture. The Middle English Wyclif used is very difficult to follow on it's own, but here, alongside the later versions, the text of Wyclif becomes readily accessible.
- 2. The 1534 New Testament of William Tyndale.** Tyndale was not only the architect of Holy Scripture in English but he was also largely responsible for crafting Modern English as we know it through his Biblical translation.

3. The 1539 "Great Bible" New Testament of Miles Coverdale, sometimes called the "Cromwell" Bible or the "Cranmer" Bible, being the first "authorized" Bible of the Church of England.

4. The 1557 "Geneva" New Testament, extremely scarce in first edition, and revised for the 1560 first printing of the entire "Geneva" Bible, the cornerstone of the English Reformation.

5. The 1582 "Rheims" New Testament, the first printing of Holy Scripture in English produced by the Roman Catholic Church.

6. The "Authorized Version" of 1611, known as the King James Bible.

Recent Donations to the Ryan Center...

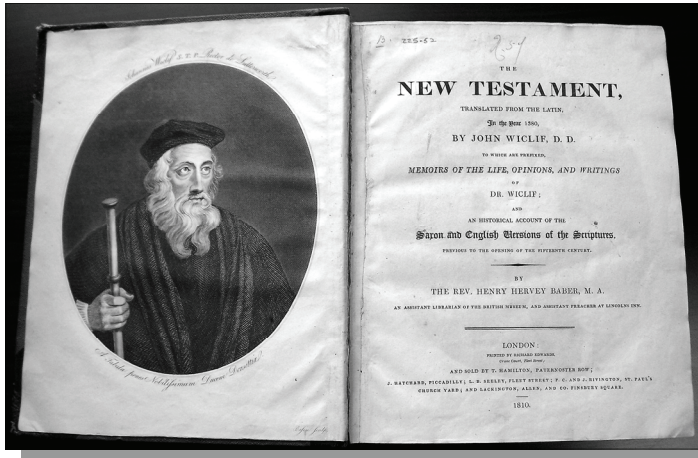
Several recent donations to the Ryan Center have been highlighted throughout this newsletter. The Merrell book donation, the *Hexapla* mentioned above and the *Wyclif New Testament* shown on page five are all gifts from generous donors who have expressed appreciation for the vision of the center.

In addition to those already mentioned the Center has also received several book donations over the summer.

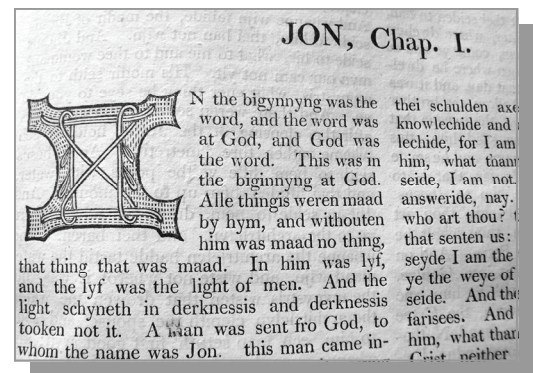
One such donation came from Ron Sloan, owner and operator of Refiner's Fire Books in Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Sloan has provided the Ryan Center with several books from our "wish" list which he held in his own collection. A native of West Tennessee, Sloan graduated from Union University in 1992 with a major in Christian Studies. Refiner's Fire Books specializes in used and out-of-print theological books. Find it on the web at:

www.refinersfirebooks.com

Artifacts On Display in Ryan Center



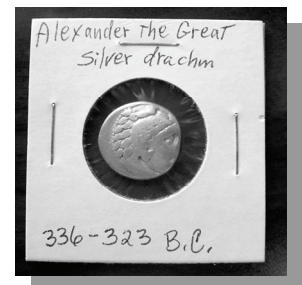
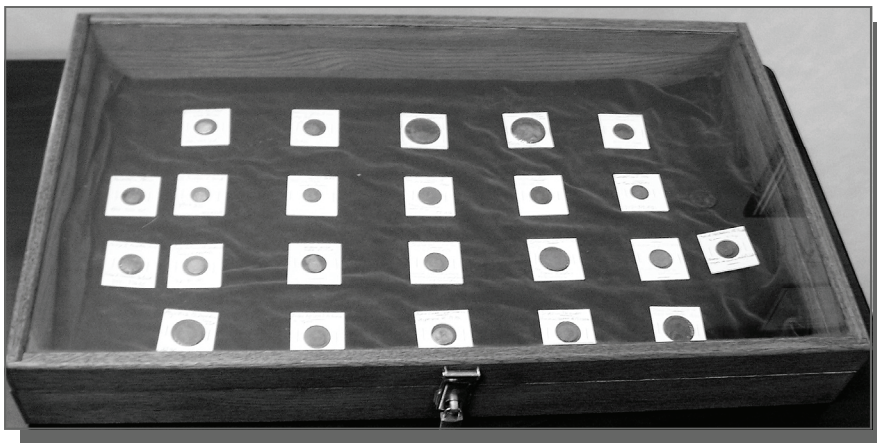
Left: An 1810 printing of **Jon Wyclif's English New Testament** written in 1380. Wyclif was one of the first to translate the Bible into English, at a time when doing so was both illegal and dangerous. Long after his death officials dug up his bones and burned them as an indication of the governments disdain for his efforts to bring the Bible to the people.



Right: Notice the unusual spelling that was common in the English language of the 14th century. Modern English readers may struggle to read even this familiar passage from the beginning of the *Gospel of John*.

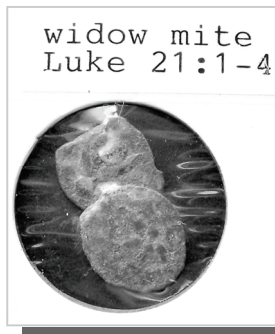
Below:

The Ryan Center is now displaying a significant collection of rare ancient coins. The collection was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Roger Uselton in memory of Nancy Sawyer Uselton.

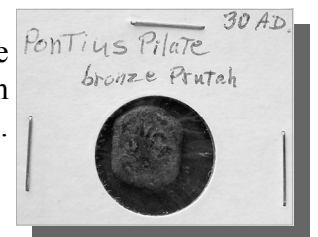


Above:

The oldest coin in the collection dates from the 4th century B.C. and displays the image of Alexander the Great.



Right: Many visitors to the Ryan Center are interested to find that a coin was circulated in ancient times honoring **Pontius Pilate**.



Left: Several of the coins in the collection are of particular interest to bible scholars. Perhaps the most famous biblical coin is the "widow's mite".

R. C. Ryan Center for
BIBLICAL STUDIES

Location:	Contact:	Hours:
Union University	731.661.5579 (telephone)	Tues, Wed, Thur.
Jennings Hall - 3rd Floor	731.661.5118 (facsimile)	9am - 5pm
1050 Union Univ. Drive	rvannest@uu.edu (e-mail)	Friday
Jackson, TN 38305-9901	bdenker@uu.edu (e-mail)	11:30am - 4:30pm

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 608
Jackson, TN

Ryan Center Publishes Recommended Book List for Building Your Own Biblical Reference Library

The Ryan Center has compiled a list of the “best of the best” bible study tools available for use by pastors and church leaders. We are drawing from the recommendations of various professors including those from Union University’s School of Christian Studies. The aim of this publication is to provide pastors, students and anyone interested in serious bible study with a checklist of the best available tools and resources.

The Ryan Center has spent months compiling recommendations from a variety of scholars hoping to identify which commentaries, dictionaries, monographs, etc. are the best in their specific areas. We have reviewed the latest offerings from over a dozen publishers in order to identify which are most helpful for sound and serious biblical

exploration. Rather than trying to survey the entire landscape of broad, academic biblical study, this list is specifically designed to target those works which will be most helpful for pastoral use.

The publication provides recommendations on a variety of subjects. It highlights the “best of the best” commentaries available for each book of the bible and lists some of the most helpful books on theology, Greek and Hebrew languages, church history, etc.

