

Union's Investment in Biblical Literacy

But among all our joys, there was no one that more filled our hearts, than the blessed continuance of the preaching of God's sacred Word among us; which is that inestimable treasure, which excelleth all the riches of the earth; because the fruit thereof extendeth itself, not only to the time spent in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth men unto that eternal happiness which is above in heaven.

The translators who presented King James with the first English translation of Scripture wrote these words four centuries ago. Historians tell us the English-speaking world was never the same once this work was released.

The KJV gave direction to the English language. In many homes, it was the only book a family could afford to purchase. Children learned to read by reciting and memorizing its verses. For the first time, adults could consider and interpret the passages for themselves. Baptists, drawing on their understanding of the priesthood of all believers, recognized this privilege and responsibility as a central principle to their theology.

In the fall, Union University will mark the 400th anniversary of this important milestone with the KJV 400 Festival on the Jackson campus. Union is an appropriate venue for such a festival. For generations, Union has been closely connected to careful scriptural focus and noteworthy biblical scholarship.

In the pages that follow, an attempt is made to highlight Union's heritage of biblical scholarship. Read about faculty and alumni who have played key roles in shaping our understanding of Scripture; find out about current scholarship among the School of Theology and Missions faculty, including a new national effort to bring renewed biblical literacy to the churches; explore plans for the KJV 400 festival and the work of its sponsor, the R.C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies; and look into the prolific biblical scholarship of President David S. Dockery, who continues to write and edit important reference works that will serve future generations. ■