

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Exhibition of Rare Venetian Bibles on View at the Museum of Biblical Art**

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 11, 2011—The first Hebrew Bible printed by a Christian press; the first Bible to include an alphabetical table of contents; the first fully illustrated Latin Bible. These are just a few of the “firsts” in a new exhibition of rare Bibles on view at the [Museum of Biblical Art](#) from February 11 to June 12, 2011. ***Let Your Light Shine: Bible Printing in Venice during the High Renaissance*** features 20 volumes from 18 publications and celebrates the remarkable achievements of Venetian printers during a time of prodigious artistic output.

The High Renaissance is a term usually reserved to describe the period of exceptional artistic production in Italy starting in the 1490s and ending in 1527. *Let Your Light Shine* also reveals this era to be a prolific time for printers in the unique republic of Venice. Gutenberg’s invention of movable type in the early 1450s allowed for the mass production of printed books. The newly invented technology of printing resulted in the production of more editions of the complete Bible in Venice than anywhere else on the continent. Venice became one of the most important publishing centers in Europe as early as the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Bibles printed during the High Renaissance reflect the unique character of Venice, a multilingual, multinational republic. The exhibition includes Bibles printed in ancient and modern Greek, Spanish, Hebrew, Latin, and, of course, Italian.

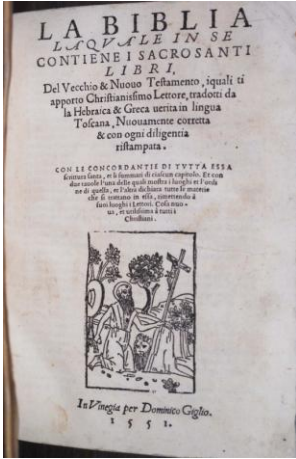
“The astounding advancements of these Renaissance printers and the variety of works produced during this era are just a few of the accomplishments highlighted in this exhibition,” said Dr. Ena Heller, Executive Director of the Museum of Biblical Art. “These Bibles are an extraordinary treat, amazing in their detail, each with its own fascinating story to tell.”

The Bibles on view are drawn from the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA, a selection of 2,200 printed Bibles, including 42 incunables, and approximately 15 manuscripts. On long-term loan from the American Bible Society, it is one of the most comprehensive

collections of its kind which documents the history of the printed Bible throughout the ages.

### Exhibition Highlights

Bible in Italian (1551, *left*): Antonio Brucioli's translation of the Bible became a favorite of



Italian-speaking Protestants. In 1522, Brucioli fled his native Florence for Lyon, where he engaged the ideas of the German and French Reformers. As a result, he was forced into exile and spent much of his later life in Venice. He was tried for heresy twice while there and eventually spent many years under house arrest. The Bible on display was published by Domenico Giglio in 1551 and features Brucioli's translation. It used the traditional order of the Vulgate, incorporating the Apocrypha among the other books of the Old Testament. Despite this, it was placed on the infamous *Index of Forbidden Books* issued by Pope Paul IV in 1559 and ceased to be reprinted in Catholic Europe.

For Western scholars, the ability to read Greek was key to understanding a literature previously known only through its Latin counterpart. Aware of the need for Greek books, Aldus Manutius (1450-1515), Venice's preeminent printer, produced three of the earliest printed Greek Scriptures: a Greek Psalter (c.1497, *right*); the first significant portion of the Greek New Testament ever to be printed (1504); and the first edition of the entire Greek Bible (1519). All three works are on display in *Let There Be Light*.



Bible in Latin published by Nicolas Jensen in 1476 (*left*): The second Bible printed in Venice, this Scripture is elegantly printed in a variety of black letter Jensen developed two years earlier for books on medicine and history. The running titles at the tops of each page helped produce a more user-friendly Bible.

Additional highlights include two editions of the New Testament printed in Geneva and fraudulently bearing the names of Venetian publishers. These two "counterfeit" imprints are evidence of the prestige of Venetian books and of the city's impact on Bible publishing.

Exhibition and preservation of the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA is made possible, in part, by the generous support of the American Bible Society and Hans G. and Barbara Jepson.

**About The American Bible Society:**

Headquartered in New York City, the mission of the 194-year-old [American Bible Society](#) is to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford, so that all people may experience its life-changing message. The American Bible Society started collecting Scriptures in 1817, only one year after its founding. Through gifts and an ambitious acquisitions policy, the Library grew throughout the 19th century. Today, the collection includes more than 45,000 volumes and constitutes one of the world's largest collections of printed Bibles. Learn more: [AmericanBible.org](#).

**About Museum of Biblical Art:**

Located near Lincoln Center at 1865 Broadway at 61st Street, [MOBIA](#) presents critically acclaimed art exhibitions while offering an array of affordable arts enrichment programs to visitors of all ages. MOBIA celebrates and interprets art related to the Bible and its cultural legacy in Jewish and Christian traditions through exhibitions, education and scholarship. Past exhibitions have featured highlights from the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA and the history of the Bible in the New World. Upcoming exhibitions include *On Eagles' Wings: The King James Bible Turns 400* (July 8-September 18, 2011). Admission to MOBIA's exhibitions is free for members and children under 12 and pay-what-you-wish for adults, with a suggested admission of \$7; Sundays are always free. Museum hours are: Tue., Wed, Fri., Sat., Sun.: 10:00 AM-6:00 PM; Thurs: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM; Mon: Closed. Visit [www.mobia.org](#) for more information on current exhibits and public programs.