

**PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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**TREASURES FROM THE RARE BIBLE COLLECTION @MOBIA  
ON VIEW IN *PEARL OF GREAT PRICE***

**Inaugural Exhibition of Unique Collection Pays Tribute to  
Unsung Heroes of Bible Translation**

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 8, 2010—Charles Thomson’s English translation of the Greek Old Testament (1808), Karl Gützlaff’s Gospel of John in Japanese (1837), and William Carey’s Bible in Bengali (1832) are among the treasures exhibited in *Pearl of Great Price: Selections from the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA*, on view February 25 to May 30, 2010 at the Museum of Biblical Art. Culled from the holdings of the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA, recently on loan to the museum by the American Bible Society, the 20 items on display in this inaugural exhibit celebrate little-known Bible translators, printers, and distributors and their quest to “spread the Word.”

For more than two thousand years, untold numbers of people speaking thousands of different languages have read or heard the Bible in translation. In many of these languages, the Bible was the first literary text ever produced. Many translators have remained unknown, shrouded in legend or concealed behind the corporate identity of large committees—until now. *Pearl of Great Price* acknowledges these unsung heroes whose lives were dedicated to researching, translating and distributing the Bible; those who used and were transformed by it; the publishers who made it available and the artists who embellished it.

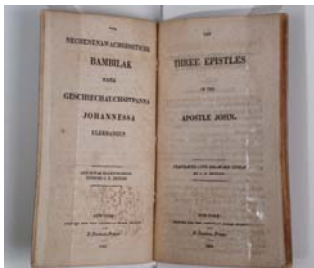
"*Pearl of Great Price* is the first in an exciting roster of exhibits and programs that highlight the many facets of this rare collection of printed Bibles in the repository of the American Bible Society library for almost 200 years," said Dr. Ena Heller, Executive Director, Museum of Biblical Art. "We are thrilled to be able to unveil this trove to the public, undoubtedly one of New York City's best-kept secrets."

"The volumes on display illustrate the methods undertaken—often in extreme conditions and under improbable circumstances—by translators, publishers and sponsors to ensure that the Bible reached those who desired it most," said Dr. Liana Lupas, Curator of the Rare Bible Collection @MOBIA and exhibit organizer. "These Bibles are a testament to their spirit of perseverance and dedicated service."

### **Exhibition Highlights**

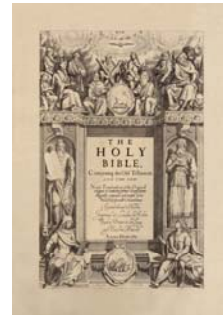
Since its founding in May 1816, the American Bible Society (ABS) viewed the publication and distribution of Scriptures in American Indian languages as one of its top priorities. On display is a copy of Reverend Christian Frederick Dencke's translation of the Gospel of John in Delaware and English, published in 1818 (*left*). The Bibles sold for 7 cents each at a time when the price of an ABS English octavo Bible cost between \$3 and \$1.25 and the price of a duodecimo English New Testament was 35 to 40 cents.

In 1861, ABS made a grant of 300 Bibles to the firm of Russell, Majors and Wadell, the owners of the Pony Express. Along with riders, the Pony Express employed personnel to tend the horses and over 160 stations along the route. Alexander Majors, one of the owners of the company, insisted that all his employees lead an exemplary life and provided each with a Bible printed by ABS (*right*). The copy on display is one of the 300



donated by ABS in 1861 and used in one of the stations along the Pony Express route, as indicated by the inscription stamped on its cover: "Station Overland Mail Company. For use of travellers and Station Agents."

Additional highlights include a copy of the New Testament in Malay, the first language in Asia to have a printed New Testament; a first-edition copy of the King James Bible, from 1611 (*right*); English New Testaments printed in 1943 and packaged in water-resistant envelopes (*left*) ready to be placed in survival kits on ships and planes during WWII; and one of Helen Keller's Bibles from 1908.



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Support for *Pearl of Great Price: Selections from the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA* and all related programs has been provided by the American Bible Society.

**About The American Bible Society:**

Headquartered in New York City, the mission of the 193-year-old American Bible Society is to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford. Learn more: [AmericanBible.org](http://AmericanBible.org).

**About the 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 ranged from "outsider" art of the American South and medieval liturgical art to the works of Marc Chagall, Albrecht Dürer and Georges Rouault. Upcoming exhibitions will feature work by Louis Comfort Tiffany and by Andy Warhol. 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., Sun.: 10:00 AM-6:00 PM; Thurs: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM; Mon: Closed. Visit [www.mobia.org](http://www.mobia.org) for more information on current exhibits and public programs.