

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Finding Comfort in Difficult Times: Special Collection of Soldiers' Bibles on Display at MOBIA

NEW YORK, February 1, 2012—The [Museum of Biblical Art](http://www.mobia.org) is proud to present ***Finding Comfort in Difficult Times: A Selection of Soldiers' Bibles***. On view from February 3 to May 20, 2012, the exhibition showcases 36 of the most significant scriptures published for U.S. military personnel. In the last 150 years, tens of millions of Bibles have been distributed to American soldiers on active duty, as prisoners of war, and to the sick and the wounded. The show illustrates the history of Bible printing and the massive effort to meet the spiritual needs of servicemen and women throughout 11 wars, including the American Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The exhibit also reveals touching accounts of hardship and faith within the tragic context of these conflicts as evidenced through the marks and inscriptions left on the books themselves. The soldiers' own words provide an intimate glimpse of the travels, travails and sheer courage of those who fought for this country.

"Every scripture in the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA has its own unique story," said Executive Director, Dr. Ena Heller. "These Bibles tell the tale of our nation's collective war-time history, unveil poignant accounts of personal strength and struggle, and honor the vision and leadership of those who stepped up to provide soldiers with inspiration during very trying times."

Exhibition Background

Efforts to supply Scriptures for American troops date from the early 1780s, when plans were made to give copies of the Bible to every man enlisted in the Continental Army, however, Robert Aitken completed the printing process in the fall of 1782, when most of the combatants had already been demobilized. The idea survived and was enthusiastically embraced, some 35 years later, by the American Bible Society. In 1817, the one-year-old Society made a grant of 65 Bibles to the crew of the U.S.S. John Adams, a frigate that had been commissioned in 1799 and continued to be used until 1865. This was the first step in what ultimately became the distribution

of more than 50 million scriptures to the U.S. Armed Forces over time, creating a trove of individual war-time experiences that speak volumes from beyond the grave.

Exhibition Highlights

New Testament, NY: American Bible Society, 1860



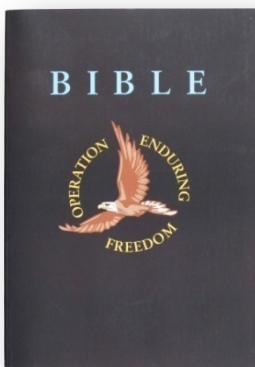
The American Bible Society printed this New Testament before the outbreak of the Civil War, the New York Bible Society repurposed it for the armed forces in April 1861, and Captain William H. Underhill received it on or before June 27, 1861. When he signed the book, Underhill was commanding Company G in the 1st Regiment of New York State Volunteers at Fortress Monroe in Virginia. He wrote in his copy of the New Testament: "I visited here in 1831 - then a boy. I am again here as a Captain in the 1st Regiment N.Y.S.V." Several notices pasted at the end of the New Testament explain that Captain Underhill enlisted on May 3, 1861, age 45, and died on Friday, November 10, 1882, aged 67.

New Testament, NY; American Bible Society, 1917

Chamberlain Bounds, of Abilene, Texas, who fought in the Marine Corps in World War I, carried this New Testament through the long odyssey that brought him from his home to the fields of Flanders. At the end of the book Bounds wrote the address of a young lady from Orléans. A card inserted in the book talks about the comfort he had found in the New Testament: "Dear Jane: No friend will miss you more than I will and none grieve more at thy departure. In parting I give you this little soiled Testament which has been my greatest strength and comfort. Friends may fail you here, loved ones may depart and we seem sorely pressed, but in this book we find a friend who cannot fail and gives Life Eternal."



Complete Bible, NY: American Bible Society, 2001



When the United States Government launched Operation Enduring Freedom, the American Bible Society printed a special edition of the scriptures for the soldiers engaged in this conflict. Working in cooperation with the Chief Chaplains, the Society provided Bibles without the Apocrypha for the Protestant soldiers and Bibles including the Apocrypha for Catholics.

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 that documents the history of the printed Bible throughout the ages.

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Exhibition and preservation of the Rare Bible Collection @ MOBIA are made possible, in part, by the generous support of the American Bible Society. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY



About The American Bible Society:

Headquartered in New York City, the mission of the 196-year-old [American Bible Society](http://AmericanBible.org) 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. Admission to MOBIA's exhibitions is free for members and children under 12 and has a suggested admission of \$7 for adults; 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.