



Dr. Daved Anthony Schmidt  
Senior Curator  
(405) 996-4936  
[anthony.schmidt@mbible.org](mailto:anthony.schmidt@mbible.org)

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Melisa Ferguson  
Clerk of Session  
Webster Presbyterian Church  
201 W. NASA Parkway  
Webster, TX 77598-5207

Dear Ms. Ferguson,

I am writing to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues for considering Museum of the Bible's request to borrow the Communion Chalice and Presbyterian Seal used on the Lunar Surface for our upcoming exhibition. I understand some individuals have expressed concerns about recent news coverage involving the museum and certain past acquisitions. Please allow me to address these very legitimate concerns by explaining how the museum has taken steps to rectify these problems.

In the years leading up to our opening, a donor to Museum of the Bible (Hobby Lobby, Inc.) acquired objects with unclear or, in some cases, problematic provenance. We at the museum, like many other people, were deeply troubled once these missteps came to light. Most of these acquisitions were made nearly ten years ago. Since then, however, I am proud to say new leadership has spearheaded efforts to enact policies that ensure such actions never happen again. We strive not only to model the best museum collecting practices, but also to go beyond them in many cases. You can read more about our guidelines in our Collection Management Policy [here](#).

Over the past several years, the museum has worked hard to address problematic objects that made their way into its collection. In addition to adhering to all national and international museum standards (AAMD, AAM, ICOM), the museum has also committed to the declaration of the American Schools of Oriental Research to not publish or present artifacts with problematic or unknown provenance. Additionally, the museum has retained the services of Thomas Kline of Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC, one of the preeminent lawyers in the United States on art and cultural property. You can learn more about him and his work [here](#).

This work has borne fruit in a number of ways. The museum has already repatriated some objects

and continues to engage with countries of origin to return others. In several cases, we are proud to say these conversations have fostered valuable partnerships, resulting in collaborative projects between Museum of the Bible and these institutions and governments.

At the same time, the museum has embarked on several projects pertaining to the provenance of the rest of its collection. Indeed, the museum has made provenance research and public transparency one of its primary objectives. To this end, we are steadily building a robust Collections Page that includes a description and provenance record for each object. You can view this page, along with our statement on provenance research, on our website [here](#) and [here](#). By investing its resources into this type of research, Museum of the Bible has now become one of the leaders among museums in collection transparency.

Finally, the museum has voluntarily supported scientific research into the authenticity of several objects in its collection, most notably its purported Dead Sea Scrolls fragments. This testing, which the museum has funded, has now confirmed that five of these fragments are likely to be inauthentic. We are awaiting the results on the other fragments. Throughout this process, the museum has maintained an open and candid relationship with various news sources. Moreover, it has shown its dedication to accurate scholarship and to making the results of this research widely known to the public. For example, museum officials welcomed and participated in a recent NOVA documentary on this research into these fragments, which you can view [here](#).

We cannot erase the errors of our past, and neither do we wish to. Museum of the Bible has acknowledged its mistakes and embraces its responsibility to uphold the ethics that accompany the preservation and display of our collective human heritage. Our work has not gone unnoticed. the museum is proud to be in long-term partnerships with the Vatican Museums and Library, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Additionally, we have hosted several exhibitions with objects from numerous institutions around the world. The Bible and Science exhibition alone will bring together objects from organizations such as the Austrian National Library, the Laurentian Library in Florence, the National Archeological Museum of Greece, and the Taranto Archeology Museum of Italy.

I hope this letter goes some way to allay any concerns you might have had about lending us the chalice and seal. To be sure, much more work needs to be done. However, our policies, our ongoing research, and our commitment to meeting the highest museum standards have allowed us not only to begin correcting past mistakes, but also to become an example of the best practices moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. A. Schmidt".

Daved Anthony Schmidt