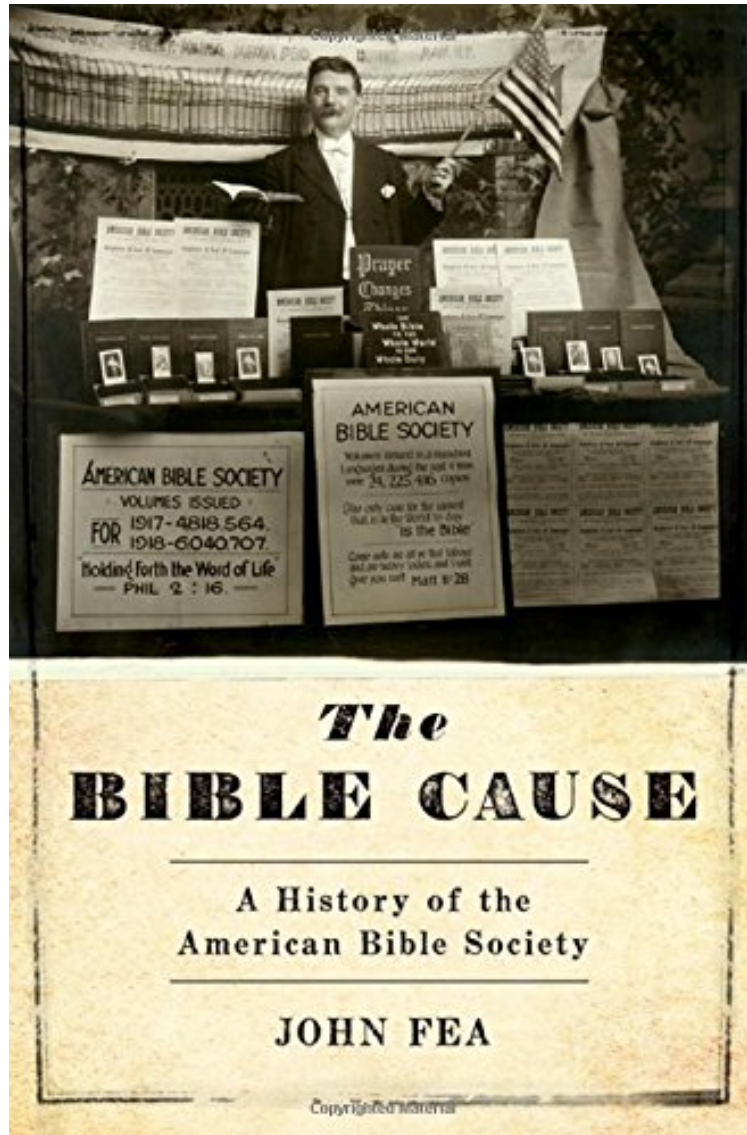


[Download pdf ebook] The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society

# The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society

John Fea

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**John Fea : The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Useful Book for Historians of Christian ExpansionBy jacksonrl527The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society by historian John Fea recounts the two hundred year history of the American Bible Society. As such, one might expect it to be rather bland. In my Ph.D. research, I have read a couple of institutional histories, and they tend to be dull accounts of buildings and donors.

However, Fea is an excellent writer. His most well-known work is *Was America Founded as A Fea* manages to write a book a compelling account of the ABS story and its commitment to distribute the Bible in the United States and around the world. The book should be of interest to anyone who wishes to understand the influence of Christianity on American society. It should also interest to missiologists and church historians. Strengths What keeps this history from being dry is the narrative framework of the book. The narrative nature should keep the ABS story attractive to the average reader. At the same time, the story reveals key points mentioned in the introduction that Fea wants to get across. First, the Bible is the word of God with a salvation message. As such, it must be distributed widely in the common language of the people. (p. 3) Second, the ABS held to a cultural mandate of building a Christian society in the United States and around the world. (p. 3) Fea reiterates these points as they arise in the narrative. For those who see evangelical activism as something new and foreign to the American story (or only present during election years), these points may surprise. Another key strength is the refreshing honesty of the history. In one sense, this book is an authorized biography of the ABS. The ABS asked Fea to write the book because wanted a scholarly history. As a historian, Fea was committed to academic freedom. The ABS allowed for that freedom. Therefore, the book contains the good, the bad, and the ugly of the ABS. Thankfully the story is mostly good. My interest in ABS history comes from research into the expansion of Christianity in the American Midwest in the early 1800s, particularly in the work of John Mason Peck, whom Fea mentions in the book. Several individual stories from the ABS history can serve as missiological case studies. Though the ABS did not see itself as a missionary agency, its workers often faced similar struggles to those of missionaries. The work of Frances Hamilton in Mexico is particularly noteworthy for her cultural adaptation and commitment to reach the Mexican people. Weaknesses As someone who loves history, particularly related to Christian expansion and evangelical influence on American culture, it saddens me that this book will not have broad appeal beyond people like me. Despite the narrative nature, it is unlikely that a casual reader could pick this book up and stay with it for its 360 plus pages. Sections will come across as dry if one is not already interested in the subject. Final Analysis Still, this book should be a valuable reference. The story of the ABS intersects with the whole of United States history including slavery and freedmen, Native Americans, mainline denominations, evangelicalism, fundamentalism (both small and capital f), politics, wars, and military excursions. As such, researchers could use it as a starting point to dig deeper in new areas. Missiologists should also take a look. Missiologists have noted the tie between Scripture distribution as extensive seed sowing of the gospel and church planting movement. Researchers could investigate correlations and causations between ABS campaigns and church planting and church growth. (Full Disclosure: Oxford University Press gave me access to a non-corrected electronic copy of this book in exchange for review purposes. I was under no obligation to write a positive review.) 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. In-depth history of the American Bible Society By Debbie "The Bible Cause" is an in-depth history of the American Bible Society. The book started with the formation of the ABS in 1816 and ended in 2003 (with the epilogue covering 2003-2015 and future goals). The author described the changing structure, methods, goals, programs, and campaigns of the ABS. He tied these changes into changing social attitudes and new technologies. He described the motives behind the ABS's efforts and how their efforts affected American culture. We're told about the ABS outreaches to the poor, blacks, Native Americans, immigrants, soldiers, and the blind. We learned about the controversies involving the different Bible translations they were willing to sell and their changing relationship with Catholics. We learned about their early efforts in Mexico and China and later in post WWII Germany, Russia, Japan, China, and Korea. Considering the length of this book, I would have preferred an author who was enthusiastic about the ABS's work. Instead, the author seemed disinterested or mildly disapproving. For example, the ABS tended to set high goals for Bible distribution. The author repeatedly labeled these efforts as failures because they didn't meet these goals even though what they did achieve was impressive. Overall, I'd recommend this book to people deeply interested in the American Bible Society, but probably not to those only mildly interested. I received an ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Too much By John CA As a long-time member of a state Bible Society familiar with the American Bible Society, I was eager to read this history.. I love the Bible ....BUT ... this was too much like reading all of the "begats" in the Old Testament plus all the laws that "must" be kept as listed in Leviticus Judges. Even a delicious chocolate cake eaten all at once can give you discomfort. This was just too much.

Endorsed in its time by Francis Scott Key, John Jay, and Theodore Roosevelt, the American Bible Society (ABS) is a seminal institution for American Protestants. The group was founded in 1816 with the goal of distributing free copies of the Bible in local languages throughout the world. Today, the ABS is a Christian ministry based in Philadelphia with a \$300 million endowment and a mission to engage 100 million Americans with the Bible by 2025. In *The Bible Cause*, noted historian of American religion John Fea demonstrates how the ABS's primary mission - to place the Bible in the hands of as many people as possible - has caused the history of the organization to intersect at nearly every point with the history of the United States. For the last two hundred years, the ABS has steadily increased its influence both at home and abroad, working with all Christian denominations in the US and internationally, aligning itself whenever possible with the gatekeepers of American religious culture. Over the years ABS Bibles could be

found in hotel rooms, bookstores, and airports; on steam boats, college and university campuses; the Internet; and even behind the Iron Curtain. Its agents, Bibles in hand, could be found on the front lines of every American military conflict from the Mexican-American War to the Iraq War. However and wherever the United States developed, the ABS was there. Throughout the last two centuries ABS has never wavered in its mission, and its commitment to be the guardian of a Christian civilization has been proven many times over.

"For two hundred years, supporters have opened their wallets to fund the [American Bible Society], trekked into unknown lands on its behalf, and distributed Bibles with its name stamped inside the cover. Fea tells this story perceptively and with care. He ably sets the ABS in the context of US history in a way that makes The Bible Cause especially helpful for those interested in the history of missions, US imperialism, the Bible (both in the United States and globally), and biblical translation. Ultimately, Fea's work offers a well-researched and thoughtfully argued account of the institution and people who dedicated themselves to the Bible cause."--Andrew Klumpp, Reading Religion"By integrating anecdotes of colorful and heroic agents such as P. M. Ozanne, Young Bin Im, and Frances Hamilton, Fea makes organizational history an enjoyable read. In an institution dominated by white men, he also goes out of his way to stress the importance of laypeople and women in accomplishing the society's goals...[The book] will be of most interest to historians of the early republic, national identity, and American religion."--Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains"Fea's work is scholarly but accessible...Readers who are interested in the Bible in popular culture or American religious history will find this an engaging read."--The Bible Today"Fea's work, which will appeal to anyone interested in American religious history, offers a well-written account of the history of a group that has had a tremendous impact on religious life in the United States and worldwide, adapting to new situations and technologies while remaining true to its original mission." --Augustine J. Curly, Library Journal"John Fea's history of two hundred years of the American Bible Society is full of unusually perceptive insights. The book shows how the society advanced both evangelistic and nationalistic purposes, sustained great activity at home and abroad, balanced heavenly-minded goals with up-to-date business savvy, promoted an old religion through modern technologies, and prospered with inter-denominational cooperation while surviving considerable controversy. It is a splendid book to mark a noteworthy anniversary." --Mark A. Noll, author of In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492-1783 "The Bible Cause is far more than a definitive history of the American Bible Society, though it succeeds admirably in that respect. John Fea also tells a broader story about American culture, how religion came to play such a central role in shaping national identity and how, in turn, secular ideals have shaped American belief and behavior. It is an important story, told with affection, care, and thoughtful critique." --Margaret Bendroth, Executive Director of the Congregational Library Archives "In an engaging survey of the American Bible Society, Fea leads us through Bible distribution in ever-widening circles. His expansive sweep highlights dissemination on the U.S. frontier, within the war-ravaged communities of the postbellum American South, and around the globe. He shows how the Good Book both followed and accompanied U.S. imperial aspirations, and also how its influence motivated believers to see America as a Christian nation united by reverence for the Word." --Laurie Maffly-Kipp, author of Setting Down the Sacred Past: African American Race Histories "This comprehensive history, written to commemorate the American Bible Society (ABS) bicentennial, explores the ABS's roots, guiding philosophies, evolving mission, and influence domestically and internationally . . . Fea references 'sensational accounts of the struggles faced in Bible distribution' included in ABS publications, and highlights individuals such as Frances Hamilton, ABS's first female agent, who stayed in Mexico through the 1910 Revolution, and 'Aunt Sue,' an African American ABS volunteer who in 1943 boarded a bus full of whites to explain how the Bible would bring racial harmony. These stories put a human face on this national movement."--Publishers Weekly "Institutional histories are tricky to writeELFea should be commended for completing in 2016 what no less a scholar than Kenneth Scott Latourette was unable to finish in 1966."--Religion in American History "John Fea has written a lively and reasonably comprehensive bicentennial history of the American Bible Society (ABS)...this outstanding public history deserves careful consideration from both religious executives and university scholars."--The Journal of American HistoryAbout the AuthorJohn Fea is Professor of American History and Chair of the History Department at Messiah College, in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.