



God's Men

Pearl S. Buck

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This is a massive novel, in length, breadth, and depth. It sweeps from China to America to England, and in a half-century of colorful action it ranges from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 to the critical struggles of 1950. The author brings warmth of feeling and the light of understanding to many and varied Characters, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sun Yat-sen, and Chiang Kai-shek

God's Men Details

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Author : Pearl S. Buck

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Petya says

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Rebecca says

In truth, this is more of a 2.5 star rating. In truth truth, it is probably more like a 2, but I would never allow myself to give Pearl Buck a 2 star rating! I love her too much. :)

This novel is quite different from the others I've read for two reasons: her mythic, one-dimensional main characters (all male) and the underdevelopment of secondary characters (mostly female).

The novel, like all of Buck's, begins with a fascinating concept: what happens when you take two vastly different missionary kids who grew up in China and bring them to the U.S.? How will their unique upbringings both shape them and challenge their ability to be fully human? William grew up with an idealistic Episcopal missionary father and an aristocratic-leaning mother, while Clem grew up with parents who were missionaries outside of an official denomination. While William's family was well-supported by a mission board, Clem's family were forced to "depend on God" for their daily needs. Much to Clem's chagrin, this often meant begging from other missionary families or from the Chinese for food.

In the U.S., William takes his experience and decides to seek ideological and financial power, while Clem decides to spend his life eradicating hunger worldwide. Buck plays with the similarities in these stark characters -- both are idealistic, both resemble their missionary fathers more than they'd like to admit, and both are larger than life, committed to an idea, which takes them beyond the scope of human relationships.

Yet in the end, I could not relate to either character. Each seemed to symbolize an idea. I wanted more complex humanity.

Then, perhaps even more disturbing, each of these men sought out marital relationships, and the women they married complacently and unquestioningly took on the role of supporting their husbands' wild ideals, to the detriment of any meaningful marital communion. At one point in the novel, I found myself wanting the women to have affairs already -- something I usually despise in life and literature -- because the women didn't have any agency in human connection. They just resigned themselves to their fate, some happily! Argh!

But overall, the novel reveals some interesting insights into growing up as a missionary kid, and of course the ideas themselves about religion and service to humanity are still important and worth the read. Still, I missed the well-rounded characters that I'm so used to in Pearl Buck novels.

Quick addition: After some more biographical research on Buck, it seems like William might be based on real-life Henry Luce, who was born in China but left there after his childhood and never learned Chinese. He became editor of "Time" and "Life," and he and Buck had a huge falling out -- he basically called her a communist! I'm now reading this novel as if it were her literary revenge on him, which frankly, makes it much better of a read. I can almost excuse her vilification of the main character now.

Rita Abecasis says

História da família de Clem que acaba por ser o único sobrevivente dos tumultos da Velha Imperatriz e do Imperador da China contra os estrangeiros.

Clem passa por dificuldades para regressar a América, o seu país de origem, mas encontra a generosidade de algumas famílias que lhe conduzem, em segurança, a um navio que o traz de volta aos estados unidos.

Nesse país enfrenta novas dificuldades com as chamadas crianças do auxílio, que são órfãs, e vivem com dois tutores que as tratam mal. Clem acaba por concretizar o plano de fuga e só convence uma das crianças a viajar com ele. O seu objectivo é trabalhar o máximo que puder para ter alimentos e regressar a Pequim.

Paralelamente conta a história de William e sua família e a entrada dele e de Jeremias Cameron em Harvard. E a fuga da família para Pequim quando o cerco a Pequim foi levantado.

Bem escrito e com uma narração de fácil compreensão e leitura e cativante.

Uma intriga que levanta questões político - religiosas, entre amizades entre famílias e histórias de amor. Relata igualmente o encontro de Clem e William por correspondência e as suas vidas futuras nas suas terras natal. Narrativa passada entre a China e os EUA e a Índia e França onde decorre a primeira guerra mundial, a grande depressão da bolsa nos anos 30, a segunda guerra mundial e por outros países da Europa. A maior preocupação de Clem era alimentar o povo faminto e de William era ter um jornal satírico próprio que obrigasse o povo a pensar como ele queria.

Cindy says

I probably would have given this book 3.5 stars. I felt like the beginning of the book was more enjoyable than the end. I hoped that William and Clem would resolve some of their differences as they got older and would work together toward their goals. If you love Pearl Buck's novels as I do, you'll enjoy this. Another great choice for a church book club!

Sandra says

Lo he leído porque lo tenía. De no haber estado en mi estantería nunca lo habría hecho. El motivo habría sido mi mala experiencia con Viento del este, viento del oeste pero también una falta de interés manifiesta por China. Sin embargo, estaba desesperada, quería reconciliarme con algún autor clásico (todavía no he asumido que soy incapaz de leer a Tolstoi) y tenía tiempo. Cuando quise darme cuenta ya casi había terminado el segundo tomo. Y lo mejor, sin excesivo esfuerzo.

Los hombres de Dios del título son dos hijos de misioneros estadounidenses en China, William y Clem. Tras

el levantamiento de los bóxers, ambos regresan a Estados Unidos y el desarrollo de su vida allí quedará siempre condicionado por su experiencia en el país asiático. Ambos se convierten en hombres millonarios y poderosos pero ni los fines que persiguen ni los medios que utilizan se asemejan.

Es bueno que en *Hombres de Dios* no haya percibido una superioridad del pensamiento occidental enmascarado. No puede existir porque China ya no es lo que era. Es solo una ilusión, una utopía, o peor, algo que hay que salvar. La dicotomía aquí se centra mucho más en los aspectos espirituales de los dos protagonistas. Al parecer son dos caras de la misma moneda. Siempre insatisfechos. Para terminar hay una moralina, claro. Y una pregunta que se hace William cuando le sorprende la duda: “¿he hecho bien?” Sin Dios todo habría sido mucho más fácil...

Stephanie Ricker says

I read *God's Men* by Pearl Buck this week, but I'm not quite sure what I think of it yet. As always, Buck is extremely talented, and she takes what would be an off-putting topic for any other author and makes it very compelling. And yet...there's an “and yet.” I ended up dragging myself through the book and was glad when the story ended, even though individual lines moved me. The difficulty may lie in the fact that most of the characters are unlikable or unrelatable. Characters don't have to be either, but it does help in terms of keeping the reader engaged. The story explores the lives of two men, both the sons of (very different) missionaries, both pursuing two very different paths in life, but ultimately both consumed with a driving hunger to affect the world in some way. Buck's works are often set in a religious context but are not themselves religious, which is in a way similar to Buck's life: she was the daughter of missionaries in China, but had a somewhat troubled relationship with religion. There are no pat answers (or possibly any answers) in the book, which is true to life, if a tad unsatisfying. I'll have to think about the work more.

Shari Klase says

A contrast of character

This is not my favorite Pearl S Buck book. It starts out interesting enough in China with a compelling narrative of two boys, both the sons of missionaries caught in a country of turmoil and hatred for foreigners. One sees his family murdered but both escape China to reinvent themselves in America. One cares for the world. The other only cares for himself. A little bit too long and drawn out for me with no real ending. It left me feeling dissatisfied.

María Paz Greene F says

Me gustó mucho el principio, me dije "¡qué libro más bueno, qué suerte!" y leí a la velocidad del rayo, pero después... no tanto. Parecía que los personajes se iban a encontrar, de alguna manera, en alguna parte, pero no... los "hombres de fe" (título en español) viven cada uno por su lado y... también me pareció, no solo por eso, que se desinfló el final. No hubo moraleja (o no la entendí), ni nada, y los personajes, casi todos, me decepcionaron... pero el principio y hasta la mitad, valen la pena sí o sí, leerlos.

Autumn says

Why do I always forget how much I enjoy her books? I can see how some would not enjoy this as much as I did. Story about two American men born in China to different missionary fathers. Both ended up in America during the Boxer Rebellion without their families. Book follows these two men and their rise in the country they belong to but are strangers to.

Nadia says

A disturbing read. Both of these men were brought up believing in God and yet both of them hardly resembled Christianity even though they both have done a lot for the cause. This is a dissonance novel that ends rather on a sad note, in my opinion.

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Barbara says

Somehow I thought this book would never end...Not my favorite Pearl S. Buck read.