



# Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Conciliator

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# Christian Missions

## Failure or Success?

- ✦ Thousands of missionaries
- ✦ Tens of millions of dollars
- ✦ Never exceeded 1% of the Chinese population
- ✦ Most converts were rich Christians
- ✦ Friendship Christians
- ✦ Numbers are not all.
- ✦ Failures are more apparent than successes.



# Christian Missions

## First & most influential writer on the issue

- ✦ Daughter of American Presbyterian missionaries
- ✦ Among peasants & with high edu. in Ch. & E.
- ✦ *Fighting Angel, 1936*
- ✦ *The Exile, 1936*
- ✦ *Pavilion of Women, 1946*
- ✦ *Peony, 1948*





# Christian Missions

## Two Opposite Hard Feelings

### East:

- ✦ Tai Ping Uprising
  - US missionary Issacher Roberts tutored HXQ
  - Frederick Ward (US) & Charles Gordon (UK) helped sprs
  - 20 million Chinese killed in 13 years of rebellion, 1851-64

### West:

- ✦ Boxer Rebellion, a counterpart of TP Uprising in 1900
- ✦ Nationalist Nanking ransack, six killed in 1927
- ✦ Communist revolution, 1949



# Christian Missions

## ✦ **For their own needs more than for Chinese**

- Dialog, Mrs. Pettibrew & Deborah, Andrew's mother in *FA*
- Personal authority over others' minds & lives, chpt. 2
- Many privileges & very prominent in China, Fairbank
- Preparing themselves for the second coming, Fairbank
- Carie, not lack of beauty but for beauty in *Exile*
- Tragic hero and heroine in a mission impossible



# Christian Missions

## ✚ Reasons of the failure

- Different attitudes, chpt. 5 of *FA*
- Personal authority over others' minds & lives, chpt. 2
- Many privileges & very prominent in China, Fairbank
- Preparing themselves for the second coming, Fairbank
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# Christian Missions

- To this day they maintain an incredible narrowness of creed which accepts in entirety the miracles of virgin birth, water changed into wine, the dead raised to life, and the second appearance, hourly expected, of Christ. Their judgment upon those who do not or cannot so believe is inhumanly cruel---such persons simply do not exist for them---no friendship is possible, no acquaintance desired...Religion in their case, as in so many another, has hardened their hearts and made it impossible for them to see, except through the dark glass of their own creed, what life is or ought to be.

*(FA, P. 121)*



# Christian Missions

- I have seen it in China when Westerners were trying to impress their religion upon people. With much speaking, by prayers and sermons and schools they have tried to interpret their religion. But the only time it has been interpreted and understood has been when people observing these Westerners, knowing their lives and understanding their spirit, understood something at least of what they were trying to interpret. I have heard people say in China, “This foreign religion is no good. See what a bad temper the missionary has!” I have heard people say, “This foreign religion must be true and good. See how good the missionary is who preaches it, how kind!

*(China As I See It, P. 13)*





# Christian Missions

## ✦ Other Reasons of Failure

- China opened to the Gospel at lance point (*FA*, 116)
- Fights over trivial differences among different denominations, like immersion or sprinkling (45)
- Corrupt missionaries and converts:
  - “I merely sow the good seed---he will separate the tares from the wheat” (116)
  - “Bills for opium stamped with the church seal, signed confessions, sworn statements...” (163)



# Christian Missions

## ✚ Achievements

- Medicine
- Health
- Education
- Ideas of equality
- Famine relief
- Good living examples
  - Later scholars discussed these but PB showed these in the biography of her mother *The Exile* among other books.
  - Love God through loving man. Love for God is not abstract.
  - Care for US sailors, too. “This woman was America”(218).





# Christian Missions

## ✦ Achievements

- Andre, an ideal Christian in *Pavilion of Women*
- Tolerant and understanding
- One God, many names and faces
- Orphanage
- Educated one woman, saved many.
- Traditions have reasons, not the results of an evil belief, such as arranged marriage & concubinage.





# Cultural Converge

## ✚ How Two Cultures Could Converge

- **Assimilation of Jews in Kaifeng as seen in *Peony***

“Physiognomically, linguistically, and culturally they have all become as Chinese as their neighbors” (Michael Pollak).

- **Reasons for the Assimilation**

- **Tolerance**

- **Equally long and similar cultural tradition**

- **Equal opportunities**

“We cannot live here among these people and remain separate, Father,” David argued. “In the countries of Europe, yes, for there the peoples force us to be separate from them by persecution. We cling to our own people there because none other will accept us, and we are martyred and glorified by our martyrdom. We have no other country than sorrow. But here, where all are friends to us and receive us eagerly into their blood, what is the reward for remaining apart?” (Chapter 12)



# Cultural Converge

**Tolerance  
Is the Guarantee  
Intermarriage  
Is the Key  
Love Conquers  
All of Ye**

