

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS - THE PROTESTANT PACIFIST MOVEMENT IN CHINA DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ¹

Kevin Xiyi Yao

1. Introduction

The 1920s and 30s were a turbulent time in Chinese history. In the wake of the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and founding of the Republic, Chinese society was plagued by fighting between warlords. Completing the unification of the country in the late 1920s, the nationalist regime (KMT) failed to reform the bankrupt political and economic systems, and was exhausted by prolonged wars with communists and Japanese .

In the meantime, China's external crisis was deepening. The western colonial powers' efforts to defend their own interests directly contributed to the growing tension with the rising tide of nationalism. Consequently a series of confrontations erupted in the form of strikes, bloody incidents or massacres. The most serious incident was the so-called "May-thirtieth Massacre" in May of 1925.² Of all the colonial powers Japan stood out as the most aggressive one in these years. In September of 1931 the Japanese army took over Manchuria. Early the next year it provoked an armed conflict with the Chinese army in the Shanghai area. On July 7, 1937 an all-out war finally broke out between Japan and China.

Under such a circumstance China's struggle for national salvation entered a new era. As some scholars point out, the dominant theme and driving force behind almost all the social movements in modern China was nationalism. As the national crisis deepened, the influence of nationalism became even more powerful, and the nationalist movement more radical and violent. The appeal of nationalism was so dominant that all schools of thought and political or non-political organizations, including religious organizations, had to face the issue of their relationship with nationalism.

With its historical ties with the western colonial powers, Christianity was under especially constant and heavy pressure in China. In the Anti-Christian Movement of the 1920s the church was accused of being a tool or running dog of western imperialism and capitalism. In meeting the nationalists' challenge and improving its own image, the church had to demonstrate what roles Christianity could play in national salvation.

After the First World War pacifism emerged as an important part of the social

¹ In China of that time "pacifism" was often referred as "Wei Ai Zhu Yi" (Agapism).

² In May 30, 1925 British police in foreign settlement in Shanghai shot and kill 13 Chinese demonstrators who supported the striking workers of a Japanese factory. The incident triggered nationwide anti-imperialist campaigns.

*Kevin Xiyi Yao, Ph.D. (Boston University) teaches Christian history at China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong. He is the author of **The Fundamentalist Movement Among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920-1937** (2003).*

ethics of the Protestant Church in China. Not surprisingly, rising nationalism posed a serious challenge to pacifism. As the appeal for violent revolution and resistance grew stronger, should believers and church continue to hold on to the spirit of agape and related principle of non-resistance, or simply to re-interpret them so that believers could justify their decisions of joining in the armed struggle in some ways? These were the issues Christians were constantly struggling with.

An unfortunate fact is that the pacifist tradition of the Protestant Church in China has never received any significant attention and systematic treatment so far. By tracing its history and major aspects of its thinking, this study is the initial step to recover the lost heritage of Chinese Protestant pacifism.

2. The Rise of Protestant Pacifism in China, 1918 to 1925

It was after the First World War that a Protestant pacifist movement emerged in China. The dire consequences of the war led to a widespread sense of crisis and despair in the West, and the influence of internationalism and pacifism was growing. The international missionary movement also reflected this trend.³ It was not a coincidence that the voice of pacifism began to be heard even within the Chinese church at that time. Several historical factors directly contributed to the emergence of pacifism in China. First, this was the result of reflections some missionaries and Chinese Christians made in light of the missionaries' dependence on the armed protection of the western governments and western churches' roles in the First World War. The consensus was that these acts were not in accordance with the Christian message of love and peace, and there was a need of re-discovering and re-emphasizing the message; second, the nationwide patriotic movement in the wake of the war involved many Christian students, and brought the church face to face with the nationalist movement; third, the seemingly endless civil wars served to enhance the anti-war feeling in Chinese society; fourth, as radical revolution was becoming a real alternative for many people, Christians had to address the issue of a socialist revolution; fifth, this was also the time when liberal theology and the social gospel movement spread within the Chinese church. With its strong emphasis on the kingdom of peace and justice on earth, the social gospel movement provided a powerful motivation as well as theoretical framework for pacifism. It is no wonder that all the top pacifist voices in China were believers of the social gospel movement.

Needless to say, social and religious conditions for the spread of pacifism in China were favorable. The major achievement of the movement was the introduction of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) to China.⁴ By nature the FOR was an international anti-

³ See Dana Robert, "The First Globalization: The Internationalization of the Protestant Missionary Movement between the World Wars," *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 26, No.2, April 2002, 50-66.

⁴ The Chinese translation for FOR is "We Ai She" (The Society of Love Alone).

war alliance. One of the founders and early leaders was H.T. Hodgkin, a British Quaker. From 1905 to 1910 he served as a medical missionary in Sichuan Province. After returning to UK, he worked for the Quaker mission society. As Europe headed to war, he publicly opposed bearing arms, and advocated a peaceful and loving approach to the German people. When war finally broke out in 1914, he refused to participate in the fighting in any way. At the end of the same year more than 130 anti-war British Christians gathered in Cambridge, and Hodgkin chaired the event. The meeting resolved to form the FOR.⁵ In 1919 FOR held its first international conference. By the early 1930s the FOR had a presence in more than twenty countries in Europe, North America, and Asia.⁶

In the late 1920s Hodgkin returned to China. To promote the cause of FOR was obviously on his agenda. With his support, the FOR in China was inaugurated in Beijing in 1922. Later its headquarters was located in Nanjing, and the tasks of researching, propagating, communicating, and implementing were all handled by a national committee.⁷ In just three years the FOR started branches in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin, Anqing, Chengdu, Xiamen, and Fuzhou. A bi-monthly—*Wei-ai (Love Alone)*—was published as the FOR's official organ in China. The FOR's activities included studying the issues of Sino-Western cultures and international, racial conflicts, discussing current political situation, and investigating local people's lives, etc.

In 1922 the Chinese FOR held a national conference in Shanghai, and adopted the following confession (or statement of faith):

We believe, the love of Jesus Christ is the only force that can overcome all the evils in the world, and construct an ideal society for us. Individuals are endowed with divine value by this love. Therefore, we affirm:

1. Each one of us should live our life according to His love as the standard, and is willing to pay any price for this love.
2. (We should) endeavour for social progress with the spirit of mutual assistance, and eliminate social rivalry and selfish behaviour with the spirit of agape.
3. We admire Jesus' love so much that we refuse to participate in any kind of war, aggressive or defensive, for war cannot provide a lasting solution for human disputes, but threatens the value of the human and defies the agape of Jesus Christ. We believe that evil can be overcome only by love, therefore, every country should aim to serve the others under any circumstance. It is our obligation to advocate and practice our beliefs.⁸

⁵ See Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 34-35

⁶ Wu Yao-zong, "FOR Members Wanted," *Wei Ai*, Vol. 11-12, 2.

⁷ Zheng Fan, "A Declaration of FOR in China," *Youth Progress*, No. 122, 75.

⁸ Bao Guan-lin, "Editorial: What is FOR?" Quoted from Ruan Cheng-guo, "Christian Thought of Xu Bao-qian," A Master Thesis of Hong Kong Alliance Bible Seminary, 1998, 46.

Starting as a small organization, the FOR experienced steady growth in the early years of its history. For instance, the FOR in Beijing held weekly public lectures and seminars. Topics included some of the most crucial issues of national interest and crisis. These event usually attracted more than one hundred attendants.⁹ Through these activities the FOR attempted to unify Christian pacifists and make their voice heard. From the beginning western missionaries accounted for more of the membership of the FOR than Chinese Christians. This is an indicator of the international dimension of the FOR, but it is incorrect to draw the conclusion that the FOR movement was simply a western product imported into China.

Without denying the indispensable roles of the international pacifist movement in initiating the FOR in China, I would argue that pacifism in China had its native roots. It had spread within the church in China even before the founding of the British FOR. The most celebrated cases are perhaps Wu Yao-zong (1893-1979) and Xu Bao-qian (1892-1944), the two most prominent pacifists of the Chinese church. They both accepted pacifism in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Wu was baptized in 1918. In his process of conversion, what struck him most was Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount."¹⁰ From 1921 to 1931 pacifism was dominant in his theological thinking. It is no surprise that, when Hodgkin came to China in 1921, he asked Wu for help in starting a FOR in China. Wu officially joined the FOR in May of the same year, and quickly rose to prominence. For years he played a leading role as the member and chairman of the FOR national committee and the editor-in-chief of *Wei-ai* magazine.

After being baptized in 1913, Xu Bao-qian remained a radical nationalist for sometime with a particularly strong hostility toward the Japanese. Since 1921 he had chances to study in US and got to know a number of Japanese students. Later he also visited Japan. As a result he changed his views and embraced pacifism and internationalism. Throughout his life he remained a staunch pacifist. He never became a official member of the FOR, but extensively got involved in the work of the FOR.

As the pacifist movement gained a footing in Chinese soil in the early 1920s, more and more voices in favor of pacifism could be heard in the church-associated press. By taking a closer look at these voices, we can get a glimpse of the major traits and concerns of Chinese pacifism in this period.

First, a main theme of pacifism in China is the ontological dimension of pacifism, namely the agape inherent in God's nature. It was the concept of God's love, instead of God's justice that received most attention and emphasis. The image of God as a loving

⁹ Xu Bao-qian, "A Report about Nanjing Conference of the FOR, *Truth and Life*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March, 1929, 9.

¹⁰ See Wu Yao-zong, "A Christian's Confession—Christianity and Materialism," *Tien-feng, The Christian Weekly*, No. 102, December, 1947, 4; "Jesus I Know," *Truth and Life*, Vol. 3, No.11, October 1928, 8-9.

father for all of humankind was very appealing to pacifists.

Second, Jesus' life was viewed as the model of pacifism and perfect embodiment of unconditional love. The pacifist Christology was based mainly on "the Sermon on the Mount" (Mt. 5-7). It was said that "all the thoughts of Jesus can be summed up in one word: love... The core of his words and deeds is this: as long as there is war and resistance, there is no room for humanity and righteousness. Once only love, forgiveness and tolerance prevail, we are all brothers instead of enemies."¹¹ For Chinese pacifists Jesus' love is not just a moral ideal or spirit, but it points to a concrete social relationship and social model.¹² Believers had no other choice but to imitate Him and pursue His ideal.

Third, Jesus' love is the universal love tearing down national, racial, social and all the other walls in the world. This is the nature of Christian ecumenism and internationalism. Shocked by the consequences of the First World War, the early pacifists in China felt strongly about the needs to promote internationalism. How can Christians contribute to world peace? Since Christian faith contains ideals and a spirit of internationalism, it can encourage and educate people to strive for world peace. The Christian brotherhood is a powerful antidote against nationalism and racial hatred. In addition, Christian unity or the church union (ecumenical) movement is the first step toward world peace and harmony.

Fourth, while nationalism gained momentum in China after the First World War, how to respond to nationalism and patriotism was an increasingly urgent issue confronting Chinese pacifists. Overall Chinese pacifists made clear distinctions between two different types of nationalism. On the one hand, they firmly opposed the nationalism that placed one nation's interests and rights above the others and thus encouraged aggression. Regarding rising nationalism in China of the 1920s, their consensus was that the only goal of many secular nationalists was to "make the country rich and its army strong," and this was a "materialistic" and "militaristic" type of nationalism fully preoccupied with "the glory and hegemony of the country."¹³ On the other hand, they were sympathetic with the nationalism that defended a nation's own rights over against aggressors. More specifically they had no difficulty in identifying themselves with China's national struggle against colonial powers, and always urged Chinese Christians to fulfill their obligations as Chinese citizens.¹⁴ In other words, they saw a real possibility for a Christian version of nationalism that integrates a Christian spirit of love with love of one's own country.

Fifth, pacifism turned out to be a powerful weapon against ongoing civil wars among warlords in China. With the growing public outrage at war lords, Chinese pacifists affirmed that "all the killing battles are a crime, no matter whether they are offensive or

¹¹ Shao Ming, "Jesus's View on War," 1923 *Life*, Vol.3,N.7-8, 2-3.

¹² See Hong Wei-liang, "Jesus and State," *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 8, April 1924, 5.

¹³ Chao Chang-lin, "Patriotism, Internationalism, and Christian Church," *Life*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1922, 1.

¹⁴ Peng Chang-lin, "Christians and Nationals," *Life*, Vol. 4, No.8, April 1924, 3.

defensive... We can see that human nature is against war so that our anti-war movement will win sympathy of all people.”¹⁵ Furthermore, they designed and proposed a number of disarmament measures, hoping China’s future success of stopping civil war could serve as a model for a war-torn world.

Sixth, Chinese pacifists began to notice the growing influence of socialism and rising tide of social revolution. They very much agreed with socialists in opposing social exploitation and oppression, calling for social equality. However, most of them insisted that a “Christian approach is peaceful, ...gradual, and evolutionary.”¹⁶ In other words, they always favored gradual social reform rather than radical revolution. For them, socialists’ endorsement of revolutionary violence was unacceptable.

Seventh, the early pacifists re-discovered the peace-loving nature or dimension of the Chinese cultural tradition. They argued that for a thousand years Chinese culture had highly valued peaceful means such as moral education, instead of force, as the best way of governing and handling relationships with its neighbors. One author warned that the Chinese people should not blindly and indiscriminately take over all the elements of a modern western culture, especially its glorification of “supermanhood” and might do so at cost to their own cultural virtues. He further called upon Chinese people “to cherish the Chinese culture, and strive for the future world peace in cooperation with Christianity.”¹⁷

In conclusion, the early 1920s was the period of the formation of the Protestant pacifist movement in China. During this period a solid foundation was laid for further development of the movement.

3. Organizational Decline and Theological Reflections, 1925 to 1937

After the “May-thirtieth Incident” the nationalist movement in China was dramatically radicalized. As the mood of the public was increasingly favorable toward military resistance to Japanese aggression, many church leaders and intellectuals began to doubt the relevance of pacifism. Even some leading pacifist voices found it very difficult to hold on to the classical pacifist emphasis on agape and started to stress the notion of justice. Not surprisingly, in the late 1920s, the pacifist camp shrank considerably, and the movement was at a low ebb.

The fate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in China was again a barometer of the pacifist movement. In these years the FOR was in serious decline or disarray. On the one hand, most missionary members hesitated to speak out about the situation in China in order to maintain neutrality in the midst of the nationalist revolution. On the other hand, many

¹⁵ Ren Fu, “The Awareness Chinese Nationals Should Have in Civil War,” *Youth Progress*, Vol.78, December 1924, 3.

¹⁶ Zhang Shi-zhang,, “Christianity and Socialism in China,” *Youth Progress*, Vol.56, October 1922, 6.

¹⁷ Bai Hui, “The Cooperation between the Peace-Loving Chinese Culture and Christianity in Today’s World,” *Youth Progress*, Vol. 73, May 1924, 31-32.

Chinese members, including some key leaders, simply gave up the non-violent position and dropped out.

The most celebrated case was Wu Yao-zong's transfiguration from a pacifist to a revolutionary. The Japanese take-over of Manchuria and the national uproar following had tremendous impact on Wu. During most of the 1930s Wu still maintained his belief in non-violence and in a peaceful solution to the current national crisis. But his confidence in pacifism was constantly eroded by the deepening national crisis and the urgent appeals for a military solution. Eventually in February of 1937 he resigned from the FOR. Having long been a sympathizer of the socialist movement, he made himself famous again as an outspoken Christian supporter of the communist revolution in the wake of the Second World War. In the 1950s he led the Three-Self Movement of the Protestant Church in China.

The position changes of the leadership of the Chinese FOR only served to further weaken the FOR organizationally. The number of Chinese members continued to decrease. By 1929 the FOR in Nanjing had only one Chinese out of fifteen members. And the FOR in Beijing no longer functioned.¹⁸ In the same year the national conference of the FOR resolved to revitalize itself by such measures as strengthening its national leadership and internal communication. But these measures failed to stop the decline. By November of 1932 there were only 35 Chinese out of 200 members nationwide.¹⁹ In the spring of 1935 the *Wei-ai* magazine was discontinued. After the Sino-Japanese War broke out, the FOR managed to exist for a few years and then vanished from the scene.

Interestingly, this was also the period of intensive and fruitful theological reflection within the tiny Protestant pacifist community in China. In an increasingly hostile environment the pacifists felt the need to do more soul-searching, to articulate their faith, to defend their position over against criticism and accusations, to clear up others' misunderstanding, and to present the pacifist explanations and solutions for urgent issues facing the whole nation and society. At the grassroots level, the ordinary believers found themselves no longer able to maintain a neutral position between non-violence and war, and had to make a hard choice. Therefore, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a hot debate about Christian attitude toward war and peace took place within the church. The debate shows an unprecedented depth and maturity of the pacifist thinking of Chinese Protestants. The following are the major points or focus of Chinese pacifism in this period.

Agape as the Nature of God and Principle of Universe

In these years the pacifists argued more forcefully that the significance of agape goes far beyond the arena of social ethics and is rooted in Christian ontology and cosmology. In the late 1920s, Wu Yao-zong developed his love-centered Christian ontology. He declared Christ's love is the transformation of human love and the dominant principle

¹⁸ Xu Bao-qian, "A Report about Nanjing Conference of the FOR," 9.

¹⁹ Sehn De-rong, *A Short Biography of Wu Yao-zong*, Shanghai, 2000, 113.

of the universe. In his own words, “love is the most precious aspect of human experience and the key element of human existence... It is love that sustains human life and all living things. God is the subject of all things, and the essence of God is love.”²⁰ Wu’s love-centered concept of God prepares the way for a non-violent way of life.

Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount

The most controversial aspect of “the Sermon on the Mount” was his teaching of loving enemies. In the 1920s and 30s these teachings were condemned as “the ethics of slavery,” because they supposedly served to weaken Chinese people’s will to fight and lead them willingly to become the slaves of foreign aggressors as well as capitalists.²¹ Therefore, Christian ethics was harmful to China’s salvation and reform. At that time this was a very common and powerful criticism of Christian pacifism.

In response Chinese pacifists took on the task of defending the non-violence and non-resistance of “the Sermon on the Mount.” They argued that, instead of urging his followers to be submissive to evil, Jesus advocated a spirituality by which believers can confront, resist and overcome evil. In the words of Wu Yao-zong, “pacifism does not mean passive non-resistance but active, vigorous love; passive non-resistance is the act of a coward, but vigorous love is a brave endeavour.”²² “Jesus taught us... to enhance our will and ability to resist, and resort to the method of non-resistance in order to be more effective and constructive. In contrast to resisting with force, resisting with love can touch the enemies’ hearts and change their mentality. So the world can be on its way to peace and the kingdom of love.”²³

Pacifism in Action

Chinese pacifists were convinced of the necessity and urgency of translating the principle of love into concrete steps meeting the needs of the country. First of all, most pacifists endorsed the common belief that the church could make a most valuable contribution to the character-building of the Chinese nation or to the formation of a new, modern citizenship that would make the Chinese nation strong again. But Protestant pacifists added a pacifist tone or dimension to the new citizenship or national character. Wu observed that “rivalry,” “revenge,” and “dishonesty” are three major characteristics of many peoples’ lives. In his opinion, “the life of pacifism aims to replace rivalry with cooperation, revenge with sympathy, and dishonesty with honesty.”²⁴

²⁰ Wu Yao-zong, “Jesus I Know,” 18.

²¹ See Chen Hua-zhao, “Turning the Other Cheek and People,” *Truth and Light*, Vol.4, No.220, July 1930, 33.

²² See Wu Yao-zong, “The Future of Christian Student Movement in China,” *Truth and Light*, Vol.4, No.2, April 1929, 5.

²³ Chen Hua-zhao, “Turning Other Cheek and People,” *Truth and Light*, Vol.4, No.220, July 1930, 33.

²⁴ Wu, “The Future of Christian Student Movement in China,” 7.

Second, Chinese pacifists advocated internationalism as the only possible alternative for war. Based on the Christian spirit of international friendship, they worked hard to improve relationships between China and other countries, to support international organizations of cooperation, and to eliminate misunderstanding between different nations.

Third, as Japan was becoming the major threat to China's independence, many Chinese pacifists again and again reaffirmed their anti-war stance. But they soon realized that they had to show their fellow Chinese what was the pacifist strategy to stop Japanese aggression. In the wake of Japanese taking-over of Manchuria in 1931 they supported the nationalist government's pursuit of a peaceful solution by appealing to the League of Nations and the international community for justice, instead of armed resistance. In the meantime, two other peaceful methods of resistance were also endorsed by some pacifists. The first one was economic boycotting. The second one was to establish and strengthen ties with the anti-war elements of Japanese society, and to awaken the conscience of Japanese people by more communication and truth-telling, even though some pacifists were disappointed by the seemingly prevalent nationalist fervor among the Japanese population.

Response to Nationalism

After 1925 pacifists' responses to the nationalist movement basically reflected the same mode of thinking as the previous years. Pacifists distinguished between a rational or "defensive" nationalism and an extreme and "militarized" one.²⁵ The former is usually associated with oppressed nations' struggle for liberty and independence. It seeks to maintain a nation's cultural tradition, identity and dignity, and to live in harmony with other nations. To this kind of nationalism Chinese pacifists lent their support. In their minds, China's cause of defending its own independence over against Japan no doubt fell under this category of nationalism.

For many Chinese pacifists, another kind of nationalism was responsible for the imperialist and colonial expansions in modern times. What characterizes this nationalism is "to be solely preoccupied with one's own interests and ignore others', and to take over others' lands and enslave their populations."²⁶ The people's love of their homeland is manipulated to become an evil and destructive force. In the view of pacifists, this type of nationalism is an outright violation of Christ's teachings of the golden rule and brotherly love, and should be categorically rejected.

According to some pacifist writers, both types of nationalism had their followers in China, and were competing for the soul of the Chinese nation. They were keenly aware of the possible influence the second type could exert on the future course of the country. They launched an attack on this type of nationalism on the following three fronts: first, they pointed out, from the perspectives of Christian social thought as well as human history, the

²⁵ See Philippe de Vargas "What Is Nationalism?" *Life*, Vol.5, No.4, 1925, 7.

²⁶ Di Mu "A Confession," *Life*, Vol. 5, No.4, 1925, 15.

value of nationalism could not be absolutized. In comparison to nationalism, Christian social thought certainly represents nobler aspirations of human civilization, and its concerns transcend the traditions and interests of particular nations. Second, the spiritual driving force of war is hatred and prejudice, and its consequences are destructive. And the vicious circle of violence would never end. The vicious circle theory proved to be one of the most powerful and most frequently used argument of anti-war cause in China. Third, just as the early years, Chinese pacifists continued to argue that the Chinese nation historically always relied on moral and cultural teachings and advantages in dealing with other peoples. Instead of copying modern nationalism from the West, they urged preserving the peaceful quality of traditional Chinese culture.

In comparison to the early pacifism, Chinese pacifism of the 1920s and 1930s was theoretically more sophisticated and practically more focused on particular urgent issues such as the Sino-Japanese relationship. The pacifist theological achievements were so significant that pacifism was considered one of the major theological schools of the period by some Christian scholars.²⁷

4. Resurgence of the Peace Movement, 1945-49

During the Sino-Japanese War the Protestant community in China was most concerned with international justice and national self-defense. Under such a circumstance, the influence of pacifism was understandably minimal. Sometimes pacifism even drew heavy fire from the zealous secular and Christian nationalists, and was portrayed to be propagating blind love without any sense of justice, principle and purpose, and thus harmful to China's current cause of self-salvation.²⁸ For some believers who still held sympathy with pacifism, the principles of pacifism were only relevant to one's personal life, and had no place at all in the arena of social and national life.

Not long after the Second World War ended in August of 1945, the fate of the pacifist movement dramatically turned around. Having gone through so many wars and turbulences, the Chinese people longed for a peaceful environment for rehabilitation and reconstruction, and peace and democracy became a very strong, even dominant cause in the political life of the country. During the three-year civil war between nationalists (KMT) and communists there was a widespread anti-war movement mostly in the urban areas under the nationalists' control.

So the social environment was again quite favorable to the revitalization of the pacifist movement. The small flock of Chinese pacifists found themselves able to speak out again, and their ideas were also being appreciated again. In these years the mainstream of the Protestant community in China was deeply involved in anti-civil war and anti-corruption

²⁷ See Shen Ya-lun, "Chinese Church of Forty Years," *Nanjing Seminary Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.1-2, 1950, 25.

²⁸ See Xie Dao, "Love and Forgiveness," *Tian Feng*, No.13, July 16, 1945, 10-11.

movements in the larger society. Most of the time, the pacifist voice was a part of the nationwide anti-war outcry. Till 1949 the Protestant pacifists had not attempted to re-establish their own organization and separate themselves from the larger pro-peace movement. However, the influence of pacifism was widespread, and its ethos and viewpoints were commonly present in the anti-war arguments during these years.

It needs to be pointed out that not everyone in the anti-civil war camp was a pacifist. In the late 1940s both advocates of non-violence and advocates of just war can be found in the camp. Despite their fundamental differences, they had agreement on the evil nature of the ongoing civil war and thus were able to form a kind of anti-war alliance.

On the other hand, the fundamental differences between them were quite difficult to be completely ignored. When a few skirmishes took place, they did not come as a surprise. The classical case was the debate between Wu Yao-zong and M.H. Brown, a Canadian missionary working for the Christian Literature Society based in Shanghai. When the Second World War ended, Wu had almost completed his transfiguration from a leading pacifist to a leading Christian supporter of the socialist or communist revolution. In early 1948 he began to discuss “whether Jesus hated anyone?” on the “*Tian-feng*” (*The Heavenly Wind*), one of the most prominent Protestant journals of political and social review in the period. He pointed out that in Christian tradition, “love” is always presented as a positive and constructive force but “hatred” as a negative and destructive force. In his opinion, “this cannot be the true spirit of Jesus.” In fact, Jesus did hate his enemies, even though he always believed everyone has potential to be saved.²⁹ Echoing Wu’s point, another author made an even bolder statement: “Jesus’ love is conditional... The condition is to save the good but to eliminate the bad. If Jesus’ love is unconditional, and he loved the evil and also taught us to do so, what kind of logic is that?”³⁰

Wu and his supporters’ words surprised and dismayed Brown. In her view, Wu seemed to forget Jesus’ command of loving enemies. She asked: “if Jesus hated his enemies, what hope do we, his followers still have? ‘To love your enemies’ simply becomes a nonsense.” After highlighting her own differences with Wu in interpreting certain biblical passages, she concluded that “Jesus never hated sinners of even the worst kind... Let us remember Jesus only hated ‘sin’, but loved ‘sinners’ or ‘enemies’.”³¹ The key issue at stake is whether Jesus’ love is unconditional and universal. The debate shows it is precisely on this issue that pacifists and their opponents went different ways.

²⁹ Wu Yao-zong, “Did Jesus Have Hatred?” *Tian Feng*, Vol.5, No.5, February 1948, 14.

³⁰ Xiang Shu, “Love and Hatred,” *Tian Feng*, Vol.5, No.9, 13.

³¹ M.H.Brown, “To the Editorial Office of *Tian Feng*,” *Tian Feng*, Vol.5, No.5, February 1948, 14.