

Pacifism and Communism: Reflections on Wu Yao-zong's Ideology

(An abstract)

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Wu Yao-zong (吳耀宗) was one of the major liberal and pacifist voices in Chinese church history. Most studies emphasize his sympathy for communism during his lifetime. By focusing on his pacifist thinking from 1931 to 1937, this paper aims to uncover the complexity of his attitude toward communism.

1. Humanism as the Philosophical Foundation

Wu argues for his pacifism on the basis of anthropology, and stresses the value and potential of each human being. For him, one of the major problems of communism is its advocacy of collective interests at the cost of individual rights. At the same time, he seems appreciative of certain aspects of Marxist philosophy.

2. Social Vision of Pacifism

Wu believes in the subversive and revolutionary nature of pacifism. According to him, rather than being simply passive and meek, pacifists share the communists' vision and passion for a just, loving and classless society.

3. Non-violent Path of Social Change

Being critical of the communists' use of violence, Wu expresses two points of disagreement with them. First, he refrains from hating enemies, and, second, he would not go along with implementing violence in social changes. However, he did become increasingly inclined toward social coercion as a necessity.

Overall, Wu was able to hold on to the core of his pacifism, even though his attitude toward communism was appreciative as well as critical. His thought was, in fact, increasingly influenced by Marxism. And during the years when he was influenced, one can actually spot a transition in his career from moderate pacifism to radical revolutionary.