

LETTER 104
1961

WAR AND SOCIAL STUDIES

The comments relate to a conference at Goshen College and Biblical Seminary on August 18, 1961 at which Dr MacRae was one of the speakers.

I was hoping that you might have some stimulating comments about my discussion of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It pleases me that you are planning to give special study to the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Surely this must be the determining factor in all truly Christian life and witness, to determine exactly what the Word of God really teaches. It is sad to see many Christian groups, some of them with long histories of loyalty to Christ, departing little by little from this important standard. Though not agreeing on every point with Mennonites, I have had great regard for their record of standing for the Word of God in spite of terrible obstacles. One of our faculty made a study of Menno Simons recently. Surely he was a great man of God.

In my discussion that last morning at the Conference, I had no intention of criticizing Mennonite attitudes. The question addressed to me asked how I could justify using force in defense of our western way of life. The emphasis, as I understood it, was not on whether war is ever justified, but rather on the question whether, if war is justified, it is proper to wage war to defend our freedom. Personally I feel that if war is ever justified at all, then surely it would be justified if waged for the purpose of protecting the world from such bandits as Khrushchev and Castro by defending our way of life from their attempts to eradicate all freedom and all Christianity from the face of the earth. If I could have known in advance that I would be asked this question, so as to have had a little time to prepare, I would surely have found a way to make this distinction clear.