

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE ACCORDANCY OF
WAR WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY,
AND AN EXAMINATION OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REASONING BY WHICH IT IS
DEFENDED. WITH
OBSERVATIONS ON SOME OF THE CAUSES OF
WAR AND ON SOME OF ITS EFFECTS**

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An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity, and an Examination of the Philosophical Reasoning by Which It Is Defended. With Observations on Some of the Causes of War and on Some of Its Effects by Jonathan Dymond

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JONATHAN DYMOND

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* Contempt, prior to examination, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt than almost any other disposition, to produce erroneous judgments both of persons and opinions. PALEY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

LINDLEY MURRAY, the Grammarian, and Author of several excellent school and reading books, in his last will, bequeathed certain funds to Trustees in America, his native country, for several benevolent objects, including the gratuitous distribution of "books calculated to promote piety and virtue, and the truth of Christianity."

The Trustees have heretofore had "The Power of Religion on the Mind, in Retirement, Affliction, and at the Approach of Death,"—and also, "Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Color," stereotyped, and several thousand copies printed and distributed; and they now present to the public the following work, with a belief that it is well calculated to promote the views designated by L. Murray.

1847.

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P R E F A C E .

THE object of the following pages is, to give a view of the principal arguments which maintain the indefensibility and impolicy of war, and to examine the reasoning which is advanced in its favour.

The author has not found, either in those works which treat exclusively of war, or in those which refer to it as part of a general system, any examination of the question that embraced it in all its bearings. In these pages, therefore, he has attempted, not only to inquire into its accordancy with Christian principles, and to enforce the obligation of these principles, but to discuss those objections to the advocate of peace which are advanced by philosophy, and to examine into the authority of those which are enforced by the power of habit, and by popular opinion.

Perhaps no other apology is necessary for the intrusion of this essay upon the public, than that its subject is, in a very high degree, important. Upon such a subject as the slaughter of mankind, if there be a doubt, however indeterminate, whether Christianity does not prohibit it—if there be a possibility, however remote, that the happiness and security of a nation can be maintained without it, an examination of such possibility or doubt, may reasonably obtain our attention.—The advocate of peace is, however, not obliged to avail himself of such considerations: at least, if the author had not believed that much more than doubt and possibility can be advanced in support of his opinions, this inquiry would not have been offered to the public.

He is far from amusing himself with the expectation of a general assent to the truth of his conclusions. Some will probably dispute the rectitude of the principles of decision, and some will dissent from the legitimacy of their application. Nevertheless, he believes that the number of those whose opinions will accord with his own is increasing, and will yet much more increase; and this belief is sufficiently confident to induce him to publish an essay which will probably be the subject of contempt to some men, and of ridicule to others. But ridicule and contempt are not potent reasoners.

“Christianity can only operate as an alterative. By the mild diffusion of its light and influence, the minds of men are insensibly prepared to perceive and correct the enormities, which folly, or wickedness, or accident have introduced into their public establishments.”* It is in the hope of contributing, in a degree however unimportant or remote, to the diffusion of this light and influence, that the following pages have been written.

For the principles of this little volume, or for its conclusions, no one is responsible but the writer: they are unconnected with any society,

* Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.

benevolent or religious. He has not written it for a present occasion, or with any view to the present political state of Europe. A question like this does not concern itself with the quarrels of the day.

It will perhaps be thought by some readers, that there is contained, in the following pages, greater severity of animadversion than becomes an advocate of peace. But, "let it be remembered, that to bestow good names on bad things, is to give them a passport in the world under a delusive disguise."^{*} The writer believes that wars are often supported, because the system itself, and the actions of its agents, are veiled in glittering fictions. He has therefore attempted to exhibit the nature of these fictions and of that which they conceal; and to state, freely and honestly, both what they are not, and what they are. In this attempt it has been difficult—perhaps it has not been possible—to avoid some appearance of severity: but he would beg the reader always to bear in his recollection, that if he speaks with censure of any class of men, he speaks of them only as a class. He is far from giving to such censure an individual application: Such an application would be an outrage of all candour and all justice. If again he speaks of war as *criminal*, he does not attach guilt, necessarily, to the profession of arms. He can suppose that many who engage in the dreadful work of human destruction, may do it without a consciousness of impropriety, or with a belief of its virtue. But truth itself is unalterable: whatever be our conduct, and whatever our opinions, and whether we perceive its principles or not, those principles are immutable; and the illustration of truth, so far as he has the power of discovering it, is the object of the Inquiry which he now offers to the public.

^{*} Knox's Essays, No. 34.

I.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CAUSES OF WAR.

Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.—Virg.

IN the attempt to form an accurate estimate of the moral character of human actions and opinions, it is often of importance to inquire how they have been produced. There is always great reason to doubt the rectitude of that, of which the causes and motives are impure; and if, therefore, it should appear from the observations which follow, that some of the motives to war, and of its causes, are inconsistent with reason or with virtue, I would invite the reader to pursue the inquiry that succeeds them, with suspicion, at least, of the rectitude of our ordinary opinions.

There are some customs which have obtained so generally and so long, that what was originally an effect becomes a cause, and what was a cause becomes an effect, until, by the reciprocal influence of each, the custom is continued by circumstances so multiplied and involved, that it is difficult to detect them in all their ramifications, or to determine those to which it is principally to be referred.

What were once the occasions of wars may be easily supposed. Robbery, or the repulsion of robbers, was probably the only motive to hostility, until robbery became refined into ambition, and it was sufficient to produce a war that a chief was not content with the territory of his fathers. But by the gradually increasing complication of society from age to age, and by the multiplication of remote interests and obscure rights, the motives to war have become so numerous and so technical, that ordinary obser-