

**ON THE WHOLE DOCTRINE  
OF FINAL  
CAUSES: A DISSERTATION  
IN THREE PARTS**

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On the Whole Doctrine of Final Causes: A Dissertation in Three Parts by William J. Irons

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ON THE WHOLE DOCTRINE  
OF FINAL CAUSES.

A DISSERTATION IN THREE PARTS,

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER ON  
THE CHARACTER OF MODERN DEISM.

*Josiah*  
BY WILLIAM J. IRONS, M.A.

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND CURATE OF ST. MARY'S,  
NEWINGTON, SURREY.

ΠΑΤΕΡ ΔΙΚΑΙΕ, ΚΑΙ Ὁ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΣΕ ΟΥΚ ΕΓΝΩ, ΕΓΩ ΔΕ ΣΕ  
ΕΓΝΩΝ, ΚΑΙ ὍΤΤΟΙ ΕΓΝΩΣΑΝ ὍΤΙ ΣΥ ΜΕ ΑΠΗΣΤΕΙΛΑΣ· ΚΑΙ  
ΕΓΝΩΡΙΣΑ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΣΟΥ. ΙΗΣΟΥΣ.

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T. C. HANSARD, PATERNOSTER-BOW,

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## P R E F A C E.

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So little attention is ordinarily paid to what an Author says of his own performance, that a Preface is now almost thought to be a superfluous piece of labour. But for the sake of those who may yet consider it as a courtesy due to the Reader, as well as for my own sake, I shall venture to trespass for a few lines.

It may appear to many, that the phrase "WHOLE Doctrine," used in the Title-page, requires some explanation; which, I own, I have difficulty in briefly giving; though on a general review of the Dissertation, I cannot persuade myself to alter it. I would, indeed, if it be necessary, disclaim the vanity of implying thereby, that much more may not be said on this subject, than I have brought forward: and yet I must say, that I have attempted to ascertain the exact Truth, that is to say, the "Whole Doctrine," in opposition

to the *partial* depreciations of some writers, and exaggerations of others. And I cannot help thinking, that if I were to omit the word "Whole," the title would be less suitable to the book than it is at present. Whether it be so, or not; or whether the question be of any importance, I must leave to the decision of the Public, who will be the ultimate judges, not of this only, but (which is of much more consequence) of the Book itself.

I could not acquit myself of ingratitude, if I were here to omit all reference to the late Regius Professor of Divinity, in the University of Oxford, the Rev. Edward Burton, D.D., whose loss the Church and the University have such deep and painful reason to deplore. Having received the permission of that distinguished divine to dedicate this Dissertation to him, I am bound to state, that he could not have been held responsible for every opinion herein advanced. Well knowing that no patronage could ultimately benefit any book which is destitute of all intrinsic merit, I was yet induced to seek the sanction of Professor Burton's name, thinking that it might secure a fair portion of attention for an



unknown author, which in the crowd and bustle of the world, he might not otherwise have obtained. I was also anxious to testify the high respect which I then bore to his character; and with which I now regard his memory; as a man, who by his learned and arduous labours, had so ably supported the cause of sound Christianity; which sacred cause, I venture to hope that this Dissertation may contribute in some degree to maintain. My motives for seeking the learned Professor's sanction cannot now, I trust, be liable to misconstruction; and I will not pretend that in giving me that sanction, he intended any thing more than an expression of his kind estimate of my character. I could, indeed, wish that this Volume were more worthy of such patronage. In the hope of making it so, I have already delayed its publication for several months. The new and arduous duties which I have been called to perform, (which left me no leisure even to correct the press,) are my sole excuse for the brevity and imperfection of the Third Part of the Work in particular; the subject of which is of such powerful interest and high importance, that I purpose at some future time, should my present attempt

prove successful, to publish a distinct treatise upon it.

With regard to one particular, in the style of the Dissertation, I crave some indulgence; I fear that I may sometimes appear egotistic, because I have not in general moulded my sentences in the fashionable plural form, ["we"] nor in the awkward impersonal singular: which results from this circumstance; that while I was writing, my thoughts generally flowed in the same channel as if I had been speaking, and I could not afterwards alter it, without introducing a wearisome uniformity and pompous stiffness, which would have been intolerable. And I conceived that this rhetorical manner might not be very reprehensible (unless it degenerated into looseness of expression) in a professed Dissertation; which is, so to speak, a kind of oration at the bar of Human Reason.

An apology may, I freely admit, be required, for the style of some part of the Introductory Chapter, especially in a work of this kind, where precision of expression is to be expected. But I have thought that the

practical truths therein enforced might perhaps produce a stronger impression, by being communicated in the natural, if somewhat impassioned, language, in which they were first written, than if they were enunciated in a milder tone, and with a more rigid manner.

Of the subject-matter of the Volume, it were needless for me to speak, as no observations of mine can enhance its momentous importance; and all necessary information respecting my drift and design, will be found in the commencement of the Dissertation. As Truth has been my object, and not singularity of sentiment, it will not seem strange that I have sometimes advanced opinions which have been held by those who have preceded me in the same inquiry. And though I hope that some important Truths, which seem to a great extent to have escaped previous observation, are here put forth; and some plausible errors detected; (otherwise, I could have no right to appear thus before the public;) yet I cannot of course pretend that *all* is novel, which is here brought forward. I have sometimes only attempted a clearer statement and development of admitted Truth; which may,