

**A REPLY TO DR.
LIGHTFOOT'S
ESSAYS**

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A Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's essays by Walter Richard Cassels

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WALTER RICHARD CASSELS

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TO
D^R LIGHTFOOT'S ESSAYS

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SUPERNATURAL RELIGION"

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1889

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INTRODUCTION.

I SINCERELY rejoice that Dr. Lightfoot has recovered from his recent illness. Of this restoration the vigorous energy of the preface to his republication of the Essays on *Supernatural Religion* affords decided evidence, and I hope that no refutation of this inference at least may be possible, however little we may agree on other points.

It was natural that Dr. Lightfoot should not be averse to preserving the more serious part of these Essays, the preparation of which cost him so much time and trouble; and the republication of this portion of his reply to my volumes, giving as it does the most eloquent and attractive statement of the ecclesiastical case, must be welcome to many. I cannot but think that it has been an error of judgment and of temper, however, to have rescued from an ephemeral state of existence and conferred literary permanence on much in his present volume, which is mere personal attack on his adversary and a deliberate attempt to discredit a writer with whom he pretends to enter into serious argument. A material part of the volume is composed of such matter. I cannot congratulate him on

the spirit which he has displayed. Personally I am profoundly indifferent to such attempts at detraction, and it is with heretical amusement that I contemplate the large part which purely individual and irrelevant criticism is made to play in stuffing out the proportions of orthodox argument. In the first moment of irritation, I can well understand that hard hitting, even below the belt, might be indulged in against my work by an exasperated theologian—for even a bishop is a man,—but that such attacks should not only be perpetuated, but repeated after years of calm reflection, is at once an error and a compliment for which I was not prepared. Anything to prevent readers from taking up *Supernatural Religion*: any misrepresentation to prejudice them against its statements. Elaborate literary abuse against the author is substituted for the effective arguments against his reasoning which are unhappily wanting. In the later editions of my work, I removed everything that seemed likely to irritate or to afford openings for the discussion of minor questions, irrelevant to the main subject under treatment. Whilst Dr. Lightfoot in many cases points out such alterations, he republishes his original attacks and demonstrates the disparaging purpose of his Essays by the reiterated condemnation of passages which had so little to do with the argument that they no longer exist in the complete edition of *Supernatural Religion*. Could there be more palpable evidence of the frivolous and superficial character of his objections? It is not too much to say that in no part of these Essays has Dr. Lightfoot at all seriously entered upon the fundamental proposition of

Supernatural Religion. He has elaborately criticised notes and references: he has discussed dates and unimportant details: but as to the question whether there is any evidence for miracles and the reality of alleged Divine Revelation, his volume is an absolute blank. Bampton Lecturers and distinguished apologetic writers have frankly admitted that the Christian argument must be reconstructed. They have felt the positions, formerly considered to be impregnable, crumbling away under their feet, but nothing could more forcibly expose the feebleness of the apologetic case than this volume of Dr. Lightfoot's *Essays*. The substantial correctness of the main conclusions of *Supernatural Religion* is rendered all the more apparent by the reply to its reasoning. The eagerness with which Dr. Lightfoot and others rush up all the side issues and turn their backs upon the more important central proposition is in the highest degree remarkable. Those who are in doubt and who have understood what the problem to be solved really is will not get any help from his volume.

The republication of these *Essays*, however, has almost forced upon me the necessity of likewise republishing the reply I gave at the time of their appearance. The first *Essay* appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, and others followed in the preface to the sixth edition of *Supernatural Religion*, and in that and the complete edition, in notes to the portions attacked, where reply seemed necessary. I cannot hope that readers will refer to these scattered arguments, and this volume is published with the view of affording a convenient form of reference for those interested in the discussion.

I add brief notes upon those Essays which did not require separate treatment at the time, and such further explanations as seem to me desirable for the elucidation of my statements. Of course, the full discussion of Dr. Lightfoot's arguments must still be sought in the volumes of *Supernatural Religion*, but I trust that I may have said enough here to indicate the nature of his allegations and their bearing on my argument.

I have likewise thought it right to add the Conclusions, without any alteration, which were written for the complete edition, when, for the first time, having examined all the evidence, I was in a position to wind up the case. This is all the more necessary as they finally show the inadequacy of Dr. Lightfoot's treatment. But I have still more been moved to append these Conclusions in order to put them within easier reach of those who only possess the earlier editions, which do not contain them.

Dr. Lightfoot again reproaches me with my anonymity. I do not think that I am open to much rebuke for not having the courage of my opinions; but I may distinctly say that I have always held that arguments upon very serious subjects should be impersonal, and neither gain weight by the possession of a distinguished name nor lose by the want of it. I leave the Bishop any advantage he has in his throne, and I take my stand upon the basis of reason and not of reputation.

CONTENTS



	PAGE
I. A REPLY TO DR. LIGHTFOOT'S FIRST ESSAY ON "SUPER-NATURAL RELIGION"	1
II. THE SILENCE OF EUSEBIUS—THE IGNATIAN EPISTLES	40
III. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA	115
IV. PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS	117
V. MELITO OF SARDIS—CLAUDIUS APOLLINARIS—POLYCRATES	129
VI. THE CHURCHES OF GAUL	139
VII. TATIAN'S "DIATESSARON"	146
VIII. CONCLUSIONS	157
INDEX	175