

**RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM  
AND INFIDELITY;  
THEIR HISTORY, CAUSE,  
CURE, AND MISSION**

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Religious Scepticism and Infidelity; Their History, Cause, Cure, and Mission by John Alfred Langford

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MISSION.

BY

JOHN ALFRED LANGFORD.

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MDCCL.

GEORGE DAWSON, M.A., F.G.S.

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DEAR SIR,

In the life of every man, no matter what his position, there are epochs of more or less individual importance; points of time whence he dates a change in his views, and an influencing cause in his after career. Such to me was my first acquaintance with yourself. To your teachings do I attribute a deeper spiritual feeling, a juster appreciation of religious truth, and a clearer insight into what properly constitutes a religious life. In the following work you will detect much of your own. For this appropriation, while returning my thanks, and making this acknowledgment, I offer no apology; knowing well that you would much rather see your seed thus germinate, than fall upon a barren soil. At the same time, it is but just to say that there is much from which I think you will differ. This has not prevented me from placing your name at the head of the work; your own opinions as to what alone can constitute the right basis of religious union having assured me that such a difference would rather be welcomed, than given as a reason for rejecting this slight testimony of regard and esteem.

But it is not so much for what you have done for me alone, that I am now desirous of thus publicly expressing my thanks. Your work is world-wide, and I believe of the highest importance to man. In this I only speak the opinion of thousands who have been delighted, instructed, and bettered by your teachings. The materialism, scepticism, and irreligion of the age, have ever found in you a stern opposer, a severe rebuker, and a conscientious antagonist. To none, therefore, could I more appropriately inscribe a work which professes, however imperfectly, to investigate the chief evil of the day.

This is not the place to speak of private virtues. One word, however, I feel bound to add. To all who know you, they have served to increase their esteem, more firmly to bind their friendship, and to convince them that piety *does not* depend upon opinion, nor a truly Christian life upon orthodoxy of belief.

In conclusion, as a small testimony of respect for your genius, of esteem for your virtues, and of gratitude for uniform kindness and affection, you will permit me to inscribe the following work with your name. Knowing full well that I hereby receive more honour than I confer,

Believe me,

Dear Sir,

Yours most truly,

JOHN ALFRED LANGFORD.

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# RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

INFIDELITY has existed in all times and all nations. Under every kind of religious worship, from the fetishism of the savage to the high spiritualism of the Christian faith, it has had an abiding place on the earth. No people can point to their annals, and declare that in their progressive career infidelity has had no retarding, no accelerating influence. The nations of antiquity afford sufficient corroboration of our assertion. The Bible abounds with evidence. The history of Greece and Rome may be summoned as a witness. The imperfect records—or rather our imperfect system of interpretation—of Egypt, Phœnicia, and nations whose history goes farther into the past than the comparatively modern ones of Greece and Rome, have still abundant proofs of the existence of this constant accompanier of our race. Mahommedanism, Hindooism, and all the thousand and one *isms* which have governed, and which still govern the spiritual life of millions, have all their

annals of the unfaithful. The phenomenon has ever been a fruitful cause of controversy, both with the sword and the pen. Many a bloody battle has been fought through, and many a mighty tome written upon, its existence. Still the question appears as much unsettled as ever. Our press teems with works upon its present influence. Our pulpits fulminate their thunders against its devoted head, and utter fearful lamentations upon its increase amongst us. Daily do we hear that our institutions are being sapped, our morals depraved, our religion undermined, by its insidious and open attempts. Under a variety of names, we are told, its baneful power is felt in all ranks of society. The emptiness of our churches is cited; the recklessness of a large part of our people upon sacred subjects is adduced as proof positive that we are going to darkness and destruction, through the folly or wickedness, or both, of sceptics and unbelievers. In a thousand forms is this hydra-headed monster devouring his victims daily. Socialism, Communism, Pantheism, Spiritualism, are given as a few of the forms of its manifestation. Revolutions are said to be its immediate production; and anarchy its certain and constant attendant. All the evils which afflict humanity, socially or politically, are proved to owe their potency to this the arch evil. Beneath the terror excited by the constant contemplation of its effects, and the fear of its increasing growth, men become prophets of disaster, and foretellers of ruin.

In this matter, as in most others, a reconsidera-