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### Alfred Russell Wallace on the Soul.

In the *World Magazine* of Nov. 20, 1910, was published an article under flaming headlines, the caption of which was "Evolution Cannot Explain the Soul," in which was made many quotations from Professor Wallace with comments intended to convey the impression that he had recently rejected the Darwinian theory "in favor of the simple biblical history of the creation of the first perfect man—a living human being with an immortal soul." The writer of the article quotes Prof. Wallace as writing, in 1900, as follows, in defense of the Darwinian theory:

"This theory of natural selection has furnished a rational and precise explanation of the means of adaptation of all existing organisms to their conditions, and, therefore, of their transformation from the series of distinct but allied species which occupied the earth at some preceding epoch. In this sense it has actually demonstrated the origin of species, and by carrying back this process step by step into earlier and earlier geological times we are able mentally to follow out the evolution of all forms of life from one or a few primordial forms."

Then, the writer says, "Today after ten years more of scientific re-

search, Prof. Wallace makes this important declaration," and quotes him as saying :

"Nothing in evolution can account for the soul of man. The difference between man and the other animals is unbridgeable. An honest and unswerving scrutiny of nature forces upon the mind this certain truth, that at some period of this earth's history there was an act of creation, a giving to the earth of something which before it had not possessed, and from that gift, the gift of life, has come the infinite and wonderful population of living forms."

The paper prints the first and second sentences of this quotation in bold capitals, and the rest of it in italics, evidently trying to exaggerate the Professor's statement into an important scientific refutation of the evolution theory, which it is not. He further quotes Wallace, thus :

"I hold that there was a subsequent act of creation, a giving to man, when he had emerged from his ape-like ancestry, of a spirit or soul."

And then follows the article written by Wallace himself for the *World Magazine*, from which I will here make a few brief extracts upon which to offer comments. Prof. Wallace begins with this statement :

"An honest and unswerving scrutiny of nature forces upon the mind this certain truth, that at some period of the earth's history there was an act of creation, a giving to the earth of something which before it had not possessed, and from that gift, the gift of life, has come the infinite and wonderful population of living forms. Then I hold that there was a subsequent act of creation, a giving to man, when he had emerged from his apelike ancestry, of a spirit or soul. Nothing in evolution can account for the soul of man. The difference between man and the other animals is unbridgeable. Mathematics is alone sufficient to prove in man the possession of a faculty nonexistent in other creatures. Then you have music and the artistic faculty. No, the soul was a separate creation. Life could not have existed on this earth when it was a red-hot planet. No life at all, not the lowest and obscurest forms. Materialists know this. Some of them get out of the difficulty by saying that life was rained upon the earth in meteors! That is a theory more amusing than ridiculous. There was at some stage in the history of the earth, after the cooling process, a definite act of creation. Something came from the outside. Power was exercised from without. In a word, life was given to the earth."

¶ It is amazing to see one like Prof. Alfred Russell Wallace, LL. D., F. R. S., make such a ridiculous assertion as he here makes in reference to another ridiculous assertion. He seems to be blind to the fact that his assertion that to begin life in the cooled earth "something came from the outside; power was exercised from without," is exactly of the same nature, and exactly as "amusing" and "ridiculous" as the statement which he says some Materialists made that "life was rained upon the earth in meteors." Both of these theories are childish and crude. They both indicate the working of intellect undeveloped or else retro-

graded. They are of the same kind as those ancient ones which accounted for the position of the earth in space by saying that it rested upon the back of a great tortoise, or on the shoulders of Hercules, or upon a monster elephant. The undeveloped mind could not go a step farther back and ask upon what does the tortoise, or Hercules, or the elephant stand?—and on, and on, and on, to eternity. If Prof. Wallace's "something," or his "power," "came from without," where did it or they come from when they entered the "without"? Such quibbling accounts in no way for an origination. When rain falls we say the water comes from the sky; but we know that before that it came from the earth through evaporation, and that those processes have succeeded one another over and over again ever since man was able to observe the ordinary phenomena of nature, and presumably long ages before that time. Nor do we account for this revolutionary phenomenon by saying that some god, or spirit, or intelligent will caused and directed it.

Another ridiculous statement of Prof. Wallace is that the blood "transforms itself" "at one point" "into hair and another nail; here into bone and there into tissue; at the same moment that it changes into skin it changes into nerve," etc. The blood no more "transforms itself" into these parts than does the water of the ocean transform itself into fishes or the soil of the fields transform itself into plants. The blood cannot of itself even flow through the arteries and veins. It is moved by the bodily organs and the elements of nutrition it contains is selected and taken from it by the cells of the various tissues just as naturally and as unconsciously as the earth attracts to its surface a falling stone when released from the human hand.

Again, Prof. Wallace says:

"There seems to me unmistakable evidence of guidance and control in the physical apparatus of every living creature. . . . I believe that guidance which superintends the management of our bodies to be the guidance of beings superior to us in power and intelligence. Call them spirits, angels, gods, what you will; the name is of no importance. I find this control in the lowest cell; the wonderful activity of cells convinces me that it is guided by intelligence and consciousness. . . . I imagine that the universe is peopled with spirits—that is to say, with intelligent beings with powers and duties akin to our own, but vaster, infinitely vaster. I think there is a gradual ascent from man upward and onward, through an almost endless legion of these beings, to the First Cause, of whom it is impossible for us to speak. Through Him these endless beings act and achieve, but He Himself may have no actual contact with our earth."

¶ Prof. Wallace well says that "I imagine," etc., because it is

imagination and not rational deduction. He says his contributions to the discussion of the questions of design and purpose "is made as a man of science, as a rationalist, as a man who studies his surroundings to see where he is." But later he says "the scales on the wing of a moth have no explanation in evolution. They belong to beauty, and beauty is a spiritual mystery." Is this the language of a naturalist, a man of science? or, rather, is it not the language of the metaphysician?

The Professor's logic is made sophistical by the assumption of the world-wide and hoary error of a "first cause" as his major premiss when he discusses the causes of phenomena, physical or physiological. A *first* cause is an impossibility, because *every* cause is an *effect* of some preceding cause. So "He," if he exists, must have been preceded by a prior cause, and so on eternally. If "beings superior to us in power and intelligence" "superintend the management of our bodies," we are logically bound to assume that beings superior to *them* guide and superintend *their* bodies or "spiritual" organizations, and on and on eternally.

At last the Professor says :

"Nevertheless, evolution is a sound hypothesis. Every fresh discovery in nature fortifies that original hypothesis. But this is the sane and honest evolution, which does not concern itself at all with beginnings, and merely follows a few links in a fairly obvious chain."

¶ This paragraph makes plain the cause of Professor Wallace's mystification. He *assumes* that there were "beginnings"—absolute beginnings, or creations out of nothing. Beginning is a term only rightly applied in a relative sense. We speak of the beginning of a day or of a year, but we know that time does not cease at the end of the previous day or year. One follows another with no line or point of demarkation. Evolution "does not concern itself at all with beginnings," true enough, because evolution concerns itself with no kind of illusionary pictures. It concerns itself with reality only. There never was and are not now and never will be, any absolute beginnings for evolution to try to account for, so far as human observation or experience has ever taught us. Besides, the hypothesis of a beginning of creation is unnecessary.