

DR. WALLACE AND SPIRITUALISM

The very interesting article on Alfred Russel Wallace, printed on another page, The Outlook here accompanies with three statements of what it regards as fundamental truths which are either not recognized or impliedly denied by the opinions of Mr. Wallace as reported by Mr. Northrop.

1. Investigations have demonstrated beyond all question that many of the phenomena regarded by the spiritists as produced by unseen visitants from the invisible world have been the product of deliberate and vulgar frauds. Neither the philosopher nor the scientist is exceptionally prepared to investigate frauds. They should be investigated by a detective familiar with the tricks and devices of a certain class of criminals. The opinion of Mr. Wallace or of Professor James on the question whether such phenomena as table-tipping, slate-writing, and rappings are due to spirits or to fraud is not particularly more valuable than the opinions of other clear-minded, intelligent, and acute observers. These frauds must be eliminated before the verdict of the philosopher or the scientist is of exceptional value upon what remains.

2. We agree absolutely with Mr. Wallace that man is more than an animal, that he has a spiritual nature which distinguishes him from the rest of the animal creation, that he has specifically a perception of the invisible world, a clear recognition of the distinction between right and wrong, a reasoning faculty which enables him to deduce general laws from observed phenomena, and a love not independent of, yet superior to and master over, all the physical sensations which accompany love. But it does not follow that he may not derive this spiritual nature by the process of spiritual evolution from the instincts and the passions of an earlier stage. There is much reason to think that this is the case. Whether it is the case or not is not a question of moral or religious importance. However man derived his eyes, he is now bound to use them in accordance with the moral law. So, however he derived his faith, his conscience, his reverence, his love, they are to be used by him, now that he possesses them, in accordance with the spiritual laws of a spiritual being.

3. The spiritual evolutionist by no means believes that development is due only to the

struggle for existence, nor that the spiritual forces in man have been developed by a purely selfish instinct for self-preservation. Henry Drummond has shown very clearly in his "Ascent of Man" that the struggle for others has played as important a part in the development of man as the struggle for self. Neither of these two struggles can be left out of account by any one who is endeavoring to understand the problem of life. And Henry Drummond has also shown that the struggle for others and the struggle for self, working together, at least help to account for the development of man from a lower animal progenitor.

If, therefore, by Spiritualism is meant the belief that disembodied spirits communicate with the living through persons called mediums, then The Outlook absolutely dissents from the statement attributed by Mr. Northrop to Alfred Russel Wallace, "The religion of the future will be based solely on Spiritualism."

If, however, by Spiritualism Dr. Wallace meant the belief that man has a spiritual nature and is therefore higher than the animals, then we absolutely agree with that statement. The religion of the future will be based on the conscious possession by man of a spiritual nature which he is bound to use in conformity with the laws of the spiritual nature.

If future investigations should show that man is able to hold communication with departed spirits, that fact would not add anything to his moral obligations, though it might add a new incentive to him to fulfill those moral obligations. We are not able to see that so far it has furnished any such incentive to those who hold this Spiritualistic faith. If, on the other hand, future investigation should demonstrate that the so-called Spiritualistic phenomena have no connection with any invisible world, but are wholly due to material forces, that demonstration would add nothing to lessen the obligation of man to fulfill his moral obligations, and certainly would not deprive men of the great motive which inspires them with the desire to fulfill those obligations. Men did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with God before modern Spiritualism was conceived of, and they will continue to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God if modern Spiritualistic phenomena should disappear entirely and the modern Spiritualist philosophy should disappear with them.