The Creed of Dr. Russel Wallace.

The promised work of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace is now in our hands, and few who are interested in the serious discussion of religion will fail to study with respect this definitive expression of the creed of a distinguished man of science who is, at the same time, a distinguished Rationalist. Rationalism imposes no dogmas. It is the cult of a method of inquiry. It has rolled the heavy burden of a despotic authority from the mind of a large part of our generation, and led the enfeebled judgment in the attainment of conclusions more consonant with the culture of our time. It is inevitable that those of us who pursue the rational method should at times differ in our conclusions, but the very nature of our method gives us some security that we shall differ without the bitter acrimony which religious differences involved in pre-Rationalistic days, and that, as our knowledge increases, we shall draw yet closer to even intellectual agreement.

Dr. Wallace is an honoured and able representative of what one may call the modern school of rational theology. When the obsolete creeds which paralyse our churches to-day have become a mere matter of history, the religious controversy will be as keen as ever, though distinguished by a higher morality. Even the most thoughtful men and women will differ for ages to come on the question whether the universe is controlled and guided by a supreme intelligence. Among our ablest scientific men of to-day we see the promise of this continued divergence of opinion. Christianity indeed is dead in the world of culture—whether scientific or other culture. At the outside a dozen names out of three hundred leaders of culture in Great Britain might be quoted as willing to subscribe to the Apostles' Creed, and the monstrous reptiles of the Secondary Period proved, and the monstrous reptiles of the Secondary Period are "returning" to religion, is not so easy to understand. Nothing in the whole zealous campaign of Sir Oliver Lodge, says that the "wave of materialism" has passed, and men of science are "returning" to religion, is not so easy to understand. Nothing in the whole zeal of Sir Oliver Lodge has been so remarkable as his splendid isolation. The spring-time of this new religious revival has consisted of one swallow. Dr. Lionel Beale complains bitterly of his own isolation in the world of physiology. Dr. Wallace candidly acknowledges that he is alone in the field of natural history. Sir W. Crookes has virtually deserted Sir O. Lodge in the region of physics. And Lord Kelvin's slender and obscure creed died with him. In these circumstances the extreme Rationalist will find all the consolation he seeks without attempting to penetrate the reticence of the vast majority of our men of science.

Dr. Russel Wallace is one of the outspoken advocates of a liberal theology, and has now offered us his mature convictions on the subject.* Candidly, we should have preferred a differently-proportioned work from the one he has given us. The first third of the volume, with its generally crude illustrations, might have been omitted without loss to his argument, while the more critical points of the argument needed fuller elaboration. We traverse with pleasure a series of powerful chapters in defence of Darwinism and in refutation of Mendelism, whose supporters_dr. Wallace disclaims it; and his doctrine of unconscious soul is a perfectly intelligible way of saying that the mind of Dr. Wallace is identical in kind with every other complex of energies in the universe. However, let us summarise Dr. Wallace's general argument before examining it.

The argument is Paleyism reconciled with evolution. The chief part of the work is a summary review of the life-story of the earth; and the specific observation, which occurs throughout, is that each succeeding phase, as our knowledge increases, we shall draw yet closer to even intellectual agreement.

The whole doctrine of evolution, and even the eternity of the material universe, have been accepted, the question of a guiding intelligence will remain open.

The most curious feature of the situation is that the abler adherents of this advanced natural theology seem reluctant to put their creed in any fulness before the public. One cannot wonder at the blunder of those who say at times that almost all our scientific men are Agnostics; but the larger blunder of those who, like Sir Oliver Lodge, say that the "wave of materialism" has passed, and men of science are "returning" to religion, is not so easy to understand.

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As biassed by spiritualism, but such able and alert biologists as Professor J. A. Thomson and Principal Lloyd Morgan. Their reasoned conviction warns us that, when

* The "World of Life," (Chapman and Hall), 1885.
Permian period: Dr. Wallace sees a mysterious significance in their long hesitation to overrun the earth. But cattle, dogs, etc., must be developed, flowers and the more useful and valuable plants must appear, the useful and precious metals— even the materials of glass— must be brought into position, before man's triumphant career is possible. Dr. Wallace is forced to see in each preparatory stage, even in the locating of iron and of the material of glass, the action of disembodied intelligences.

This is the main argument of the work. Of the subsidiary considerations I have space to notice only one of the most important. It is contended that the forces at work within the organism show just as cogent evidence of the action of mind. Neither mechanical nor vital forces can explain the building of the intricate frame from a germ, and the selection of the various tissues of the body. Even the structure and growth of a feather are held to be quite inexplicable unless we admit the operation of intelligence. Thus the whole past and present of the earth, the agencies at work in nature and in the living frame, bear witness, in Dr. Wallace's view, to the operation of intelligence. The average person will probably find it more reasonable to be content with the original obscurity, and to trust that the advance of science will throw light on this. Dr. Wallace's argument very glaringly exposes its weakness. It rests on two fallacious principles. The first is the very familiar fallacy, which supposes, and for the rest we may trust the science of tomorrow, that progress is being made in the natural explanation of those very phenomena to which Dr. Wallace appeals. His work does not show the least acquaintance with the recent literature of the subject. In Germany and the United States especially, these cellular processes are being mastered, and Dr. Wallace's claim that they cannot be explained without intelligent guidance could not be entertained seriously by one who is well acquainted with recent embryology and physiology.

The weakness of the book is even more patent in its main argument: that the processes of nature were guided, on a preconceived design, to prepare the earth for man. Dr. Wallace is too competent a student to admit the fallacy that, because certain processes had to precede the appearance of man, they were deliberately designed for him by an Infinite Power, the mysteriousness of the supposed action following inevitably upon a certain other function or structure, and that progress is being made in the natural explanation of those phenomena to which Dr. Wallace appeals. His work does not show the least acquaintance with the recent literature of the subject. In Germany and the United States especially, these cellular processes are being mastered, and Dr. Wallace's claim that they cannot be explained without intelligent guidance could not be entertained seriously by one who is well acquainted with recent embryology and physiology.

The whole trend of science is towards a mechanical interpretation of such processes. Indeed, we may go further and say that progress is being made in the natural explanation of those phenomena to which Dr. Wallace appeals. His work does not show the least acquaintance with the recent literature of the subject. In Germany and the United States especially, these cellular processes are being mastered, and Dr. Wallace's claim that they cannot be explained without intelligent guidance could not be entertained seriously by one who is well acquainted with recent embryology and physiology.