

**FEATURE: What Wallace Thought about God  
(Fourth in SERIES of 6)**

VOICE: Professor, I've been thinking about our closing thought from our last program: Force makes things move, but it doesn't organize them into something as complex as an animal or a human.

PROF.: Let's develop that thought, and see what Darwin's colleague Alfred Russell Wallace thought caused organization.

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VOICE: As we closed our last discussion, we were talking about the fact that Darwin's friend Alfred Russell Wallace was especially interested in the cell.

PROF.: Yes. His research showed him that the cell not only repaired itself, but also renewed itself, multiplied itself, and adapted itself to an environment that was continually changing. To do all this, he reasoned that the cell had to have been made by “a mind far higher, greater, more powerful than any of the fragmentary minds we see around us – a mind not only adequate to direct and regulate all the forces at work in living organisms, but which is itself the source of all those forces and energies...”

VOICE: Textbooks in cell biology point out that the living cell contains microscopic mechanical structures – including devices that function as tweezers, scissors, pumps, motors, levers, valves, pipes, chains and even transportation vehicles.

PROF.: Science educator and author Roger Steer interprets, “But of course the cell is more than just a bag of gadgets. The various components fit together to form a smoothly functioning whole, like an elaborate factory production line. Wallace correctly identified that the miracle of life is that the tiny parts of an organism are *integrated in a highly organized way.*”

He ridicules the idea that “Somehow, collectively, unthinking atoms get together and – as Paul Davies puts it so delightfully – ‘perform a dance of life’ with exquisite precision.” He continues, “I have no doubt that biologists will discover more about how the various chemical components have been utilized to put together a living cell; and that Christians will see this as one of the more remarkable aspects of God's created order as described by science.”

VOICE: Dawkins also says Darwin and Wallace demonstrated that the universe has no purpose.

PROF.: To the contrary, Wallace wrote about purpose frequently. For example, he stated, “To us, the whole purpose...of the world – with all its complexities of physical structure, with its grand geological progress, ...and the ultimate appearance of man – was the development of the human spirit in association with the human body.”

VOICE: Did Wallace think purpose in nature implied that God exists?

PROF.: Definitely! For example, he recognized that automatic processes in the human body make an interacting series of complex and precise adjustments. These adjustments act like a thermostat – keeping all the circulating fluids and internal organs at a constant temperature, varying only a few degrees.

That's in addition to the multiple factors that keep Earth's temperature within the narrow range that allows life to exist. The Earth loses heat by volcanoes and hot springs, but these losses are counteracted by heat from the sun and the conservation effect of an atmosphere that contains moisture.

VOICE: So Wallace was convinced that this balance was not an accident?

PROF.: Right. Steer adds, “Wallace listed the general conditions which he reckoned were essential for life on Earth: Light and heat from the sun, water universally distributed on the planet's surface and in the atmosphere; an atmosphere of sufficient density composed of the several gases from which protoplasm can be formed; some alternation of light and darkness.”

Earth has these conditions, which are indispensable for life. Numerous complex and exact adjustments have enabled life to exist and to continue throughout long periods of time.

VOICE: It sounds as if Wallace used the principle of “inference to the best explanation” – examining all the facts, and using logic to decide what best explained those facts.

PROF.: That's right. Wallace had been an architect, and he recognized good engineering when he observed it in nature.

Steer elaborates, "The case for thinking of humans as occupying a special place in the animal kingdom rests on:

- the degree to which humans have developed language...
- our use of imagination,
- our ability to be creative,
- our sense of absolute values,
- our ability to choose between values,
- our moral sense,
- our philosophy, scientific theories and religious ideas."

Other conditions that Wallace recognized were essential for maintaining life on Earth were the distance of our planet from the sun, the mass of Earth, the slant of the planet in its orbit, the amount of water as compared with land, an atmosphere sufficiently dense and composed of the right gases, an adequate amount of dust in the atmosphere, and atmospheric electricity. All those conditions are exactly right on Earth.

VOICE: How did Darwin react to Wallace's ideas about design?

PROF.: He wrote one geologist that he was "dreadfully disappointed" in Wallace. He was distressed that Wallace wasn't convinced that humanity's highest qualities evolved from animals by natural and sexual selection. When Wallace told him that he was going to publish his opinion that the power of natural selection had limits, Darwin replied that he hoped Wallace had not "murdered too completely" the brainchild that the two of them had invented.

VOICE: What was Wallace's attitude toward religion?

PROF.: In his book *The World of Life*, he wrote, "The main cause of the antagonism between religion and science seems to me to be the assumption by both that there are no existences capable of taking part in the work of creation other than blind forces on the one hand, and the infinite, eternal, omnipotent God as the other."

VOICE: In other words, some scientists thought *nature* did all the creating, while some religious people thought *God* did all the work. Do you mean Wallace rejected both extremes – and thought both God and nature were involved?

- PROF.: Yes. Wallace must have been brilliant. He developed the theory of natural selection independently of Darwin, but more quickly and almost effortlessly. Steer writes to Dawkins, “You regularly link Wallace's name to your argument that evolution has solved the mystery of life and made atheism intellectually respectable. ...Wallace argued precisely the opposite. His view was that scientific observations lead inevitably to believe in a higher being. ...[A]ll his observations of the universe and all its complex harmony suggested a ‘benevolent author.’ ...[T]his was for him the only explanation of humanity's special powers, morality and distinctive place in the universe.”
- VOICE: It sounds as if Wallace viewed God as the supreme intelligence.
- PROF.: Yes. That's the exact opposite of the way Dawkins tries to interpret what both Wallace and Darwin wrote.
- VOICE: Did Darwin ever agree with Wallace that humans are vastly different from animals?
- PROF.: Partly. He admitted that there is an immense difference between “the mind of the lowest man and that of the highest animal.” In his book *The Descent of Man* he wrote that if a monkey could think like a human, “...he...would admit that though he could form an artful plan to plunder a garden<sup>1</sup> – though he could use stones for fighting or for breaking open nuts, yet the thought of fashioning a stone into a tool was quite beyond his scope. Still less...could he...resolve a mathematical problem, or reflect on God, or admire a grand natural scene...”
- VOICE: But monkeys can communicate thoughts.
- PROF.: *Simple* thoughts, such as warning a mate of danger or telling him where to find food. But the notion of expressing definite ideas by definite sounds never crosses their minds. Darwin admitted, “They might insist that they were ready to aid their fellow-apes...in many ways, to risk their lives for them, and to take charge of their orphans, but they would be forced to acknowledge that [unselfish] love for all living creatures, the most noble attribute of man, was beyond their comprehension.”
- British brain physiologist Susan Greenfield seems to agree with Wallace's interpretation of the uniqueness of man. Dr. Greenfield says, “Humans spend far more time in these thinking and reasoning...processes than any other mammal, even compared to our chimpanzee cousins, whose DNA is only 1 per cent different from our own. More than any other species, we can plan ahead, form hopes about the future, and reflect on abstract concepts.”

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1 A clever way to steal the food that was growing there.

VOICE: So we humans have many abilities that we did not inherit from some sub-human species.

PROF.: That's right. Following Wallace's death at age 90, a bishop conducted his funeral. Steer observes, "It did not enter anyone's head that Wallace had solved the mystery of our existence in the sense of making atheism intellectually respectable." He was convinced that when he observed the beautiful precision in nature – the best explanation was God!

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