

- (3) Consciousness of grace
 - (a) Love
 - (b) Wisdom

The meaning of each of these attributes is determined by their reference to human experience.

Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) reacted against the subjectivism of Schleiermacher, and held that the focus of theology should not be subjective experience within the believer, but rather the object toward which faith is directed and from which faith is received. The object could only be God as revealed in Jesus Christ. However, for Ritschl what was of real importance was not Jesus' ontological nature, but his historical character and personality, i.e., his acts and sayings. And even in this regard, what was important was not the sheer facticity of this or that act or saying, but Jesus' meaning for the believer as revealing God to him.

Ritschl thus directed research away from Christian experience to the historical Jesus (a move toward greater objectivity). However, between the theologian and the objective revelation, he placed faith with its value judgments. By faith, Ritschl said, we accept those values in Christ that have real religious significance. By analysis of this faith, we arrive at religious truth. Thus the real source of theology became once again the faith of the believer. Since the virgin birth, the miracles, and the physical resurrection of Christ had no religious significance for Ritschl, he felt justified in denying them.

Thus, although Ritschl's method appeared to have a more objective starting point than that of Schleiermacher, in the end his emphasis on the experience of faith with its value judgments brought him back to theological subjectivism.

The Theory of Evolution was highly influential in the development of liberalism. The general idea of evolution as the historical process by which contemporary institutions, customs, and beliefs have come to be what they are and are now passing slowly into other forms, had become a prominent factor in philosophy a generation before Darwin's time (chiefly through Hegel). When Darwin published his *Origin of Species* (1859), his main contribution was seen to be an empirical verification of the organic evolution hypothesis.

The theory of evolution had three significant influences on religion during the Age of Immanence:

(1) It seemed to imply a naturalistic view of man's origin and nature, which was contrary to the account of man given by religion.

(2) It implied a development of the Judaeo-Christian Religion (as indeed, of all religions) from a very low, primitive form through the stages of fetishism, animism, polytheism, and henotheism, into the ethical monotheism of the eighth century B. C. prophets, which is the basis of the Christian religion.

This view of the process of development from cruder and less adequate ideas of God to higher and more ethical ones opened a way of relief from the distressing difficulties many liberals had felt existed in the orthodox view -- the imprecatory Psalms, the threats of eternal torture in hell-fire, the Old Testament massacres of men, women, and children, the picture of God as a merciless judge and ruthless punisher -- and was seen as more closely approximating man's innate sense of justice and love.

(3) It made ample room for the higher criticism of the Bible. The assumption could now be upheld that the Bible is not a supernatural revelation of God, but a record of human experiences, and of the natural development of the ideas of God and the world, of sin and redemption, of religious worship and ethical ideals. Instead of containing absolute and unadulterated truth, the Bible could be viewed as containing a historical representation of truth mixed with error, or of truth gradually emerging out of error.