

2. Historical precedent:

In a wandering way we can see the development of theological liberalism in all parts of the history of the church and at all times. We cannot justify what happens but we can analyze it:

Fallible men prepare an understanding of Divine truth and propagate it in accord with ideal and intent.

Successive generations find it harder to accept and continue the propagation of the ideas of preceding generations. This is a process that accelerates with the development of society. It moves much more slowly in primitive societies and in those that are oppressive of ideas and culture changes. In these it will usually rank itself, eventually, with social revolution and aspects of violent change. But in more accelerated societies the reaction comes more quickly since it is cultivated in these.

To accept the previous understandings either an accomodation must be offered or the original work must be of such that it does not need alteration. The latter may be true but the successive age may not accept it to that degree.

The process of accomodation widens the understanding and sometimes does so to the destruction of the original fibre. This does not happen in a matter of minutes...of course, and may take a wide passage of years.

The process is often helped by a recalcitrant body that makes no accomodation of any sort in any area. This adamant turn gives immediate fuel to the reactionary process and will actually hasten its development. The polarity that comes will probably not be beneficial to either side in a major way.

Eventually there is an issuing of totally new ideals as the liberalizing tendency has reworked the statements of previous ages to its liking.

And, as I mentioned, this cyclic sort of thinking can be seen in repetitive circles of action in the church throughout its long history...as well as in other aspects of society...the church is not the only body that suffers with this sort of movement. And I have over-simplified it a bit in this analysis but the ideas are substantially correct. It can be seen as orchestrated in the New England society by observing:

--the initial congregational ideal and the nature of the communities established in the Puritan mode..they were non-credal but non-credalism, when pressed, is exactly the same as credalism when pressed.